Commentary

Volume Fifty-seven, Number Five, May 1974

WAS WOODROW WILSON RIGHT?

DANIEL P. MOYNIHAN

The Real Solzhenitsyn
JERI LABER

Is There a New Anti-Semitism?
EARL RAAB

Our Best-Known Neglected Novelist
JOHN ROMANO

Building Blocks—A Story
ALLEN HOFFMAN

The Trouble With France
WALTER LAQUEUR

Farewell to Oil?
EDWARD N. LUTTWAK

Cagney & Other Movie Stars
WILLIAM S. PECHTER

Quotas and Soviet Jewry
WILLIAM KOREY

BOOKS IN REVIEW:
James Q. Wilson
Leon Wieseltier
Michael Novak
Dan Jacobson
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Commentary

VOLUME 57 NUMBER 5 *MAY 1974*

Articles
25 Was Woodrow Wilson Right? *Daniel P. Moynihan*
32 The Real Solzhenitsyn *Jeri Laber*
36 Farewell to Oil? *Edward N. Luttwak*
48 The Trouble With France *Walter Laqueur*

Fiction
40 Building Blocks *Allen Hoffman*

Observations
53 Is There a New Anti-Semitism? *Earl Raab*
55 Quotas and Soviet Jewry *William Korey*
58 Our Best-Known Neglected Novelist *John Romano*

Movies
61 Cagney & Other Movie Stars *William S. Pechter*

Letters
4 from *Edward W. Said, Gil Carl AlRoy, Alexander Morgan Capron, Robert H. Williams, S. J. Rawin, Theodore Draper, Arval A. Morris, Eugene V. Rostow, Michael Meltsner, Joseph W. Bishop, Jr., Sol Schlosser, Johanna Kaplan, Barbara Krupit, Lyman Owen, James Hitchchock, Claire Huchet Bishop, William H. Brownlee, Robert Alter,* and others

Books in Review
64 The American Condition, by Richard N. Goodwin *James Q. Wilson*
68 Songs of Jerusalem and Myself, by Yehuda Amichai *Leon Wieseltier*
71 Fragments of the Century, by Michael Harrington *Michael Novak*
75 H. G. Wells: A Biography, by Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie *Dan Jacobson*
80 Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein & Company, by James R. Mellow; Staying on Alone: Letters of Alice B. Toklas, edited by Edward Burns *Sonya Rudikoff*
86 Plain Speaking, by Merle Miller *Samuel McCracken*

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Letters from Readers

The Arab Mind

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Gil Carl AlRoy's article, "Do the Arabs Want Peace?" [February], rests, I think, on evidence supposedly showing the "Arab" to be vengeful and actually incapable of anything but perpetual war. Your readers should be presented with more accurate evidence, if not in the interests of political comfort then at best in the interests of truth. Two instances of Mr. AlRoy's scandalously inaccurate analysis illustrate distortions of a serious sort. Perhaps these analyses of his help along a political line, but they are simply false.

Mr. AlRoy's glowing reference to and quotations from Harold Glidden's article, "The Arab World" (*American Journal of Psychiatry*, February 1972), are intellectually mischievous. He does not tell your readers that Glidden is explicitly identified in his article not as a psychiatrist but as a former member of the "Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State." Neither does he inform your readers that "The Arab World" is no more (or less) than a four-page, double-columned psychological portrait of over 100 million people, considered for a period of over 1,300 years. Glidden cites exactly four sources for the views that Mr. AlRoy passes on to your readers as "facts" of the Arab world: a recent book on Tripoli, one issue of *al-Ahram*, *Oriente Moderno*, and a book by Majid Khadduri. The article itself purports to uncover "the inner workings of Arab behavior" which from *our* point of view is "aberrant" but for Arabs is "normal." This is an auspicious start, for thereafter we are told that Arabs stress conformity, that the Arabs inhabit a shame culture whose "prestige system" involves the ability to attract followers and clients (as an aside we are told that "Arab society is and always has been based on a system of client-patron relationships"), that Arabs can function only in conflict situations, that prestige is based solely on the ability to dominate others, that a shame culture—and Islam itself—make revenge a virtue (here Glidden triumphantly cites the June 29, 1970 *al-Ahram* to show that "in 1969 [in Egypt] in 1,070 cases of murder where the perpetrators were apprehended, it was found that 20 per cent of the murders were based on a 'desire to wipe out shame,' 30 per cent on a desire to satisfy real or imaginary wrongs, and 31 per cent on a 'desire for blood revenge' "), that if from a Western point of view "the only rational thing for the Arabs to do is to make peace . . . for the Arabs the situation is not governed by this kind of logic, for objectivity is not a value in the Arab system." Glidden continues now, heady with the power of his analysis: "It is a notable fact that while the Arab value system demands absolute solidarity within the group, it at the same time encourages among its members a kind of rivalry that is destructive of that very solidarity"; in Arab society only "success counts" and "the end justifies the means"; Arabs live "naturally" in a world "characterized by anxiety expressed in generalized suspicion and distrust, which has been labeled free-floating hostility"; "the art of subterfuge is highly developed in Arab life, as well as in Islam itself"; the Arab need for vengeance overrides everything, otherwise the Arab would feel "ego-destroying" shame. Therefore if "Westerners consider peace to be high on the scale of values" and if "we have a highly developed consciousness of the value of time," this is not true of Arabs. "In fact," we are told, "in Arab tribal society (where Arab values originated), strife, not peace, was the normal state of affairs because raiding was one of the two main supports of the economy." The purpose of this learned disquisition is merely to show how on the Western and Arab scale of values "the relative position of the elements is quite different." QED.

Glidden's piece—and I assure you that by quoting from it at length I am doing it more credit than it deserves—may be useful to Mr. AlRoy, but it isn't knowledge, it isn't psychology, it isn't science, it isn't anything at all except unmitigated racism. It isn't even the result of "value-free research," but it passes for an unimpeachable source of knowledge and a reading of Arab society, values, religion, and civilization; what is worse, it is used for the most spurious kind of social scientific ends by AlRoy. His aim is to "prove" that because Arabs are

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first of all as one in their bent for bloody vengeance, second, psychologically incapable of peace, and third, congenitally tied to a concept of justice that means the opposite of that, because of these then they are not to be trusted and must be fought interminably as one fights any other fatal disease. Such an argument, like Glidden's, could not be made today in the United States about any other ethnic group: the liberal outcry would be too much of a threat. About Arabs, however, it is *the* liberal argument *par excellence.*

Mr. AlRoy's second exhibit is a piece of philological wisdom quoted from *al-Mussawar.* What is quoted is a truncated passage that seems to imply that Arabs (Mr. AlRoy means "Arabs"—all 100 million of them—to be interchangeable with "Egyptian newspapers and magazines") distinguish between *salaam,* what they are now willing to give Israel, and *sulh,* which he says has been "emphatically ruled out by the Arabs and is not used to refer to the present diplomatic activity." What he goes on to do is, I think, completely to misrepresent the magazine article to which he refers. Salah Gawdat, its author, begins by saying that shortly after the 1967 war Mrs. Meir said that she wanted a peace *(sulh)* with the Arabs that would include her right to drive her car to Cairo "for shopping." Humiliated as they were then, the Egyptians regarded this as an insult. Now the results of the 1973 war have brought about a different situation. Egypt is willing to make peace *(salaam)* with Israel: this would include cessation of hostilities, troop disengagement, recognized boundaries. Yet if Israel believes that such a peace *(salaam)* means that Dayan can drive to Amman to shop, or that others like him can use Beirut as they would, they are wrong. *Sulh* will obtain only when Israel in turn recognizes what she has never recognized: the rights of the Palestinian people. Only when Palestinian Arabs and Palestinian Jews (here Gawdat refers to a controversial definition of Palestinian Jews as those born in Palestine before 1948: I myself disagree with so restrictive a definition) can live together, free from racialism, and in a secular state, will *sulh* obtain.

There is nothing bloodthirsty or ignoble in what Gawdat is saying. It seems to me essential to recognize at some point soon that there is such a thing as a Palestinian Arab people, and that *their* national and human rights cannot be ignored or misrepresented forever. As for Mr. AlRoy's views on "Arabs," it is probably too much to hope from him or his audience a slightly less schematic view of the other reality in the Middle East. But as a case of intellectual guilt—always being exposed and charged in COMMENTARY's pages—surely he is one, with reference to his views and proofs and evidence as an "expert" on the "Arabs."

EDWARD W. SAID
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

GIL CARL ALROY writes:

Edward W. Said's letter is surely not a serious critique of my article on contemporary Arab conceptions of peace with Israel. From a mass of evidence Mr. Said picks two instances of my alleged turpitude and ends up in effect endorsing one and side-stepping the other. I cited the excerpt from *al-Mussawar* to illustrate the distinction moderate Arabs make between a kind of armistice *(salaam)* which the Jewish state may have in return for submission to all present Arab demands, and the real peace *(sulh)* that can come only when Jewish statehood disappears. All that Mr. Said can do with this citation is to try to obscure the point and demand sympathy for the source. In the second instance he seeks to characterize some observations on traditional Arab attitudes on war and peace as esoteric beliefs of one presumably discredited individual, Harold Glidden. But it is irrelevant whether I let Glidden speak on these matters or use my own words, since what is said is about as controversial among Orientalists as the multiplication table. Indeed, this is why Glidden was able to summarize these views in just four pages in his paper on the psychological aspects of the Arab-Israeli dispute. If the number of pages is what matters to Mr. Said, he might start with the 200-odd pages of Sania Hamady's *Temperament and Character of the Arabs* and proceed to even greater numbers in Hamed Ammar's works—to cite just two Arab sources on the same matters.

But if the letter is not a serious critique of my article, it certainly is symptomatic of a serious phenomenon, long known to Orientalists as "apologetics." Arabs tend to be acutely sensitive about Western views of their society and culture

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and usually judge them in accordance with the writer's expression of sympathy for Arabs rather than for their accuracy. When some things that are commonplace in the Arab world are mentioned abroad, the reaction is easily as vituperative as Mr. Said's letter. Apart from the obvious implications for the quality of Arab intellectual work, this compulsion generates a certain climate of intimidation for Orientalists in the West, with the result that some of them are at least as concerned with public relations as they are with their proper work.

Euthanasia

To the Editor of Commentary:

A confusion occurs at a pivotal point in Sonya Rudikoff's otherwise very informative article, "The Problem of Euthanasia" [February]. In discussing a subject which lies at the threshold of an analysis of euthanasia, namely the definition of death itself, Miss Rudikoff suggests that "brain death" has been found to provide more reliable criteria than heart and breathing cessation. This much is true, as the clinical application of the so-called "Harvard criteria" has demonstrated over the past five years. But Miss Rudikoff may mislead some readers by equating persons who have experienced "brain death" with "patients, often called 'vegetables' [who] are alive and yet not living as human beings." The confusion is that many patients who are dependent to some degree on mechanical and pharmacological support, are comatose or noncommunicative, and are reduced to the "vegetative" life functions, are nevertheless "alive" with greater or lesser prospect of recovering their capacity to participate again in human interaction.

Although some of these patients may have suffered "death" of the higher functions of their brains, they can survive (albeit sometimes in a coma) for long periods without extraordinary medical care. These people have not experienced "brain death" because they have not suffered irreversible cessation of the integrated functioning of their heart, lungs, and brain (including its lower faculties). Part of the confusion is due to the term "brain death" itself, which may not only give the erroneous impression of measuring only the capacity for mentation but also suggests that there is more than one kind of death ("brain death" and "heart/-lung death"). In fact, as Dr. Leon Kass and I try to reflect in the proposed statutory definition of death, the traditional standards (permanent cessation of heartbeat and respiration) measure the same phenomenon as the newer, neurologically-based standards, which are appropriately employed when medical intervention, such as a mechanical respirator, has rendered the older tests unreliable. The legal disarray recently brought on by heart transplants from assault victims in California argues all the more strongly for the prompt enactment of legislation which would put to rest the uncertainty that now plagues physicians as well as patients and their relatives.

Being clear about the definition of death, whether "brain" or otherwise, leads us directly to the sort of questions Miss Rudikoff addresses, because if we must admit that some of the patients who are

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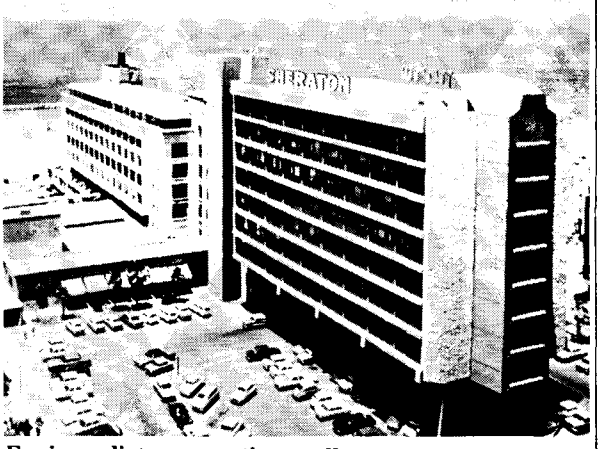

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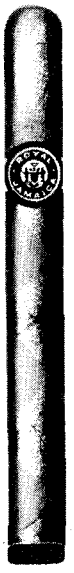

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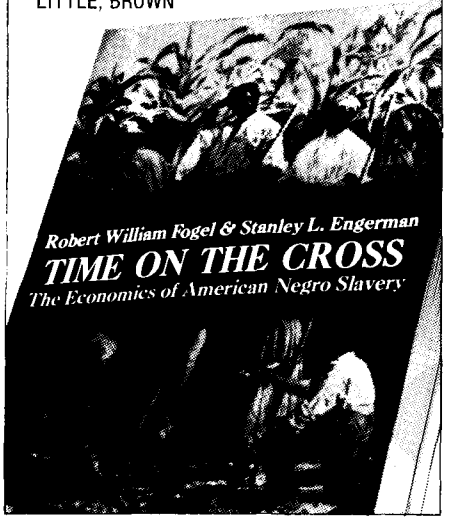

"vegetables" are nonetheless not dead (in any sense of that word as it is usually employed), we will have to decide at what point, if ever, it becomes proper to withdraw treatment or give a lethal drug to bring on death. At the moment it seems to me we have neither the medical certainty about the reversibility of many conditions nor the common agreement about what are the essential capacities for human beings in modern society that would be needed for a collective decision about when to engage in euthanasia. We are faced then with the alternative, which is really more arduous, of developing means of medical and lay education as well as legal reform to permit the effectuation of informed and humane choice by individuals.

ALEXANDER MORGAN CAPRON
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In the several surveys that my colleagues and I have conducted among various groups of physicians and non-physicians, we have found that approximately 80 per cent or more favor negative (passive) euthanasia. Yet my own observations in dealing with patients is that euthanasia is actually practiced with much less frequency and with much greater delay than is desired by patients, their families, and others. This procrastination is related to many factors, most prominent of which are: 1) the long tradition of attempting to do essentially everything possible to keep each person existing as long as possible, irrespective of the relative advantages and disadvantages to the patient, his family, and others; 2) laws forbidding euthanasia (strictly speaking, there are laws against it in each of the fifty states); and 3) church policies and canons. However, I am glad to say that I have witnessed in the last eight years a rapid increase in the number of people with understanding and approval of the principles of negative euthanasia. There remains a very strong opposition in the minds of some, especially among those who claim that such approaches constitute usurpation of the role of God. I am struck by the high degree of incongruity in thinking exercised by those who claim that the patient himself, his family, his physicians, and others have no right to make such a decision even about negative euthanasia, at the same time they claim that the propagation of life is the business only of the individuals involved. This applies even when we can predict in many instances that the progeny will have more than a 75-per-cent chance of having gross mental or physical difficulties throughout life. Such actions may produce unnecessary suffering for the individual, his family, and others.

The interrelationship of the mind, soul, and body is one that is very perplexing to many people. In my book, *To Live and to Die: When, Why and How* (Springer-Verlag), I outline the reasons why some people visualize the soul as a mysterious entity, superimposed on the body, with characteristics that are very poorly comprehended. Others, however, view the soul as a specialized aspect of mentation (thinking) and maintain that when there is no longer any thinking, there is no longer any activity of the soul, at least insofar as the person himself is aware. Thus, when mentation is permanently gone, it appears that of the body-mind-soul triad only the body remains, and it does not serve any very useful purpose as such. This principle is applied in speaking of "brain death" and the application of positive euthanasia, permitting the use of the heart for transplantation.

(DR.) ROBERT H. WILLIAMS
Department of Medicine
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Sonya Rudikoff's article on euthanasia is filled with insight and sensitivity, . . . and I agree with Miss Rudikoff's analysis of the dangers to human freedom, democratic society, and respect for human rights inherent in proposed euthanasia bills and the "living will" concept.

I must, however, dispute the statement that no one in the medical profession is seeking to exterminate people who may be considered unwanted or undesirable or to create a climate similar to the society of Nazi Germany. The *New England Journal of Medicine* carried an article only last fall indicating that about 14 per cent of all children's deaths in the area were caused by deliberate neglect on the part of doctors who felt these patients unworthy to live. The article proposed that laws should be changed to permit the doctors to make such judgments on who should die with legal impunity. . . .

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There have also been reports of dangerous, involuntary human experimentation in inner-city hospitals, and some advocates of such practices indicate that there are definite racial overtones involved.

It is not enough to say, "It can't happen here." United Community Ombudsman strongly supports the adoption of legislation on all levels, and a constitutional amendment when feasible, making it a crime for doctors or hospitals to discriminate or deny medical care to any person because of race, creed, sex, color, physical handicap, or medical condition. . . .

RONALD SEIGEL
United Community Ombudsman
Detroit, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

We would like to assure Sonya Rudikoff that no one opposing the promotion of euthanasia takes its advocates frivolously. If one reads the writings of Robert H. Williams, Joseph Fletcher, Glanville Williams, Arval Morris, Cyril Means, and others in the euthanasia movement, the Nazi analogy is quite accurate.

DR. AND MRS. ROBERT K. NIXON
Birmingham, Michigan

SONYA RUDIKOFF writes:

"Brain death" *is* distinctly different from a vegetative existence, as I believe my discussion indicated. Confusion arises in the public mind because the *interest* in this relatively new concept has developed at the same time as the refined, sophisticated techniques of organ transplantation. Concurrently, many people have become aware of the increasing number of patients who are maintained in life by mechanical supports at a minimal level of human functioning. The use of the "Harvard criteria," in the precise determination of death when technology obscures the traditional criteria, is actually irrelevant to the morality of euthanasia, but there remains widespread confusion about the meaning and usefulness of the technology, and about the point at which the criteria *do* become relevant.

Behind all the confusion lies an impatience with illness. Many people, when asked, express a preference for swift, painless death, for themselves as well as for others. There is also a certain intolerance for states of being which are not active, articulate, energetic, expressive, or animated; the vegetative existence becomes horrifying then. Elderly people are urged to be active, babies are stimulated to come out of their infant somnolence, the appearance of activity becomes evidence of being. We do not need the wisdom of the East to recognize that this may be an extremely harsh view of life.

Impatience with illness may provoke the desire to intervene, correct, or transform conditions previously regarded as given, however, and the results are sometimes heroic and noble, but sometimes not. As Ronald Seigel suggests, the rights of those subject to experiment and research are not always insured. Medical procedures, research designs, experimental conditions can all result in neglect, indifference, danger, or even in monstrosities. The Tuskegee syphilis study deprived some of the subjects of proper medical treatment; the notorious participant-observer study of homosexual pick-ups incurred serious civil-liberties problems, and so on. Such research may involve errors and difficulties, but it is clearly not to be equated with barbaric monstrous genetic or eugenic experimentation, although the concern of Mr. Seigel and of Dr. and Mrs. Nixon is understandable.

We ought to be scrupulous in insuring humane and legal procedures and at the same time extremely parsimonious in the use of that Nazi analogy. The vocabularies of social and genetic engineering or of demography or of behavior modification are susceptible of great misinterpretation; the vocabulary of psychology is notoriously misleading. Irate critics sometimes forget that the vocabularies of physics, of biology, of chemistry are equally offensive in their indifference to the human person. The language of economics, too, reveals its capacity for offense in the recent discussions of inflation, for example. And whose back are they talking about when they "break the back of the energy crisis"?

Israel Between the Wars

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Theodore Draper ["From 1967 to 1973: The Arab-Israeli Wars," December 1973, and "The Road to Geneva," February] provides a cogent account of Arab policies and of the contribution of the United Nations to the Middle East stalemate. The question that comes to mind is whether it is possible to understand what happened during these six years without considering the input of Israel, too. In this respect, Mr. Draper's statements are not very informative; and yet, his aside about "General Hubris changing sides" after 1967 seems to indicate that he does recognize the problem.

The picture of Egypt's policy that emerges from the account is that of a straight kind of track, leading from one war to another almost with a predetermined certainty. The issue was, of course, never as simple as that, either under Nasser or under Sadat. Were the peace signals that were emanating from time to time from Egyptian quarters genuine, or was this only a camouflage before a new assault? What were the chances for translating them into an authentic exchange without jeopardizing the viability of the Jewish state? It is unlikely that anybody can provide a definite answer—mainly because Egypt's intentions have never been given a serious test. On the other hand, it can be conjectured with reasonable certainty that Israel would have been in a better position to enter negotiations in 1968, in 1969, or, for that matter, in 1972, than it is now. It is this perception particularly that defines the issue.

Hindsight provides perhaps some unfair advantages to the critic, but this should not allow us to ignore its lesson. And from the vantage of 1974, Mr. Draper's explanation of the failure of the Jarring mission does not strike me as convincing: if indeed there was a chance for an effective disengagement on the Egyptian border through Jarring's intervention (and Mr. Draper's argument does not seem to exclude this possibility), was the cost of withdrawal to the old boundaries of British Palestine too high for Israel to pay? Of course, quite possibly the Jarring mission was doomed to failure for other reasons too; but the question is nagging because it touches so directly upon the broad pattern of quiescence that came to dominate Israeli policy after 1967.

If one were forced to capsulize in a single phrase the attitudes which impinged most heavily upon Israel's conduct during the six-year stretch, the words *ein brera* could well serve the purpose. Originally, *ein brera*—"no alternative"—was used in a somewhat waggish manner to explain the remarkable performance of Israeli soldiers in battle; with time, it be-

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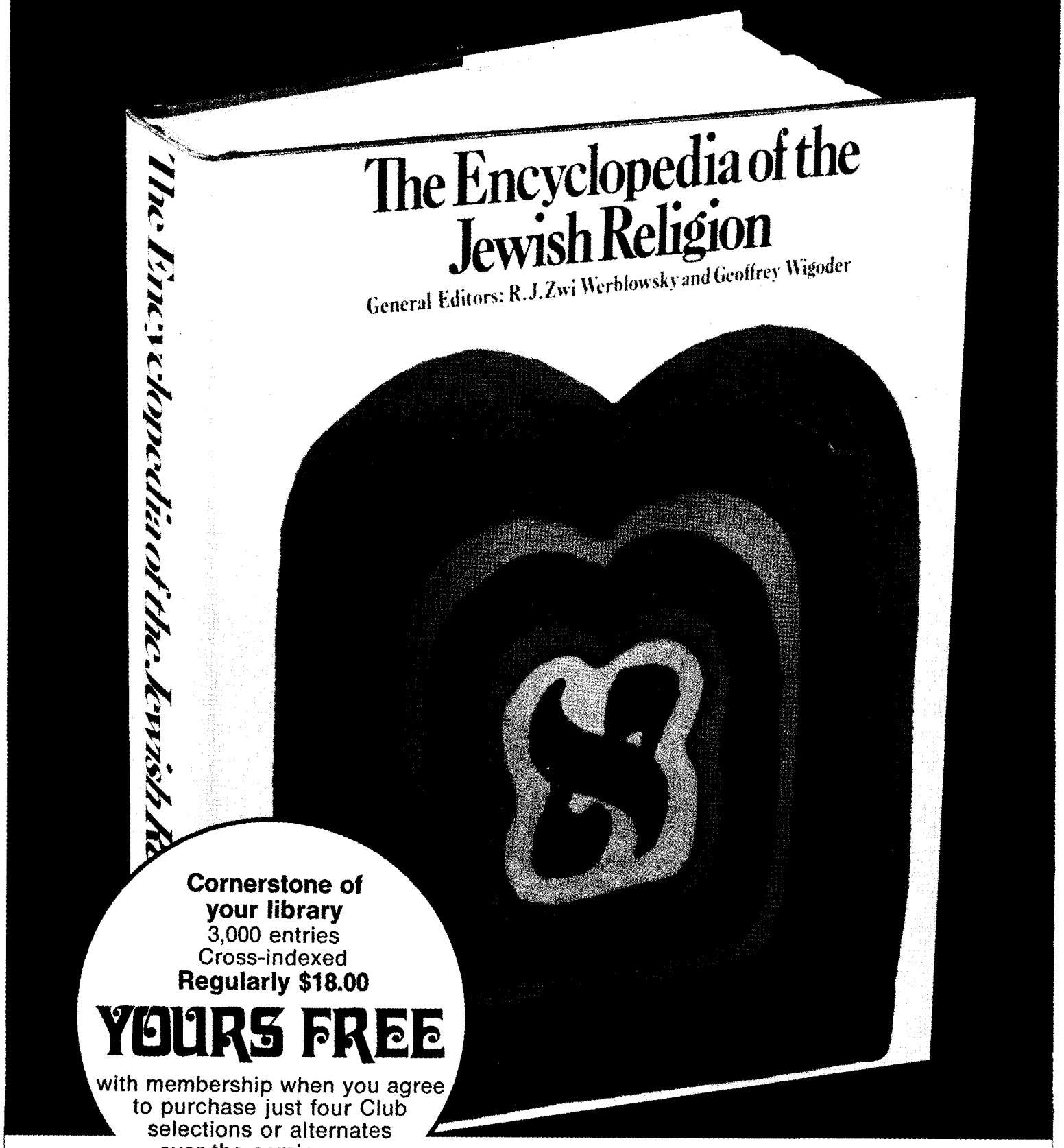
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unknown in the Bible and Talmud? (see page 57)
That Judaism frowns on celibacy? (see page 81)
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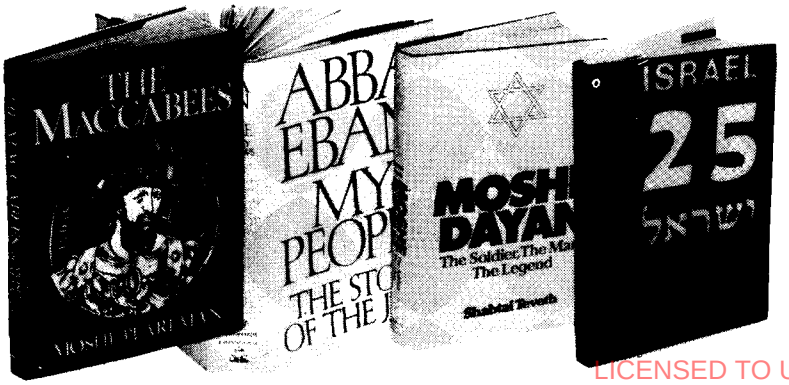

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came a way of conveying a peculiar perception of Israel's reality as a nation for which "normal" conditions of existence are unattainable (Robert Alter's reflections on "The Masada Complex" [COMMENTARY, July 1973] come to mind here). In terms of the *ein brera* syndrome, Israel resigned itself to a test of endurance of quite unrealistic dimensions. There was an obvious miscalculation when Israel assumed that it could stand pat in its position, secure in its extended borders, and that in this way it would force its adversaries to accept its terms. The major fallacy of the Israeli approach was perhaps the notion that a conflict such as the Middle Eastern one, which involved so many global interests, was resolvable through a victory, or even a series of victories, in what was essentially a local war. When Mr. Draper asks: "But when has a [defeated] country sought to dictate the terms of peace negotiations to the victor?," he seems merely to voice a frustration that grew out of faulty premises.

S. J. RAWIN
Sir George Williams University
Montreal, Canada

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Theodore Draper cites the *Middle East Record, 1967* for a passage from the testimony at his trial (in 1968) of Egyptian War Minister Badran. Badran told the court that, in May 1967, General Fawzi spoke of the Soviets having "hallucinations" with regard to Israeli troop concentrations along the Syrian border. Mr. Draper adds that he could not find these words in the sources given by the *Middle East Record.*

To put the record, and the *Record,* straight, allow me to point out that the paragraph describing Badran's evidence was put together by drawing on reports from *al-Ahram* and *al-Hayat* of February 24 and 25, 1968.

Unfortunately, as a result of a printing or proofreading error, the word *al-Hayat* was omitted from the source reference. It is in *al-Hayat* of February 25, 1968 that the "hallucinations" are mentioned.

DANIEL DISHON
Middle East Record
Tel Aviv, Israel

THEODORE DRAPER writes:

S. J. Rawin seems to have misinterpreted my allusion to "General Hubris." The latter undoubtedly contributed to the Israelis' underestimation of Arab military capabilities. But that is quite another matter from assuming that, *hubris* or no *hubris,* Israel could have induced the Arab nations to enter into meaningful negotiations, short of unconditionally giving in to Arab demands—a response which needed and needs no negotiations at all.

We are told about "peace signals that were emanating from time to time from Egyptian quarters," but we are not told what those peace signals were. Let us take an extreme example. Of course Israel could have "peace" with Syria if Israel agreed that all of Palestine was really "a basic part of southern Syria," as Syrian President Hafez al-Assad maintained as late as March 8 of this year. The Egyptian "peace signals" were more ambiguous, but they always implied that after Egypt got what it wanted, it would support the demands of its "Arab brethren," the Syrians and the Palestinians. Perhaps that has changed, but we will have to live a bit longer to find out to what extent and for how long. I would be more impressed by the complaint that "Egypt's intentions have never been given a serious test," if Mr. Rawin had bothered to tell us what Egypt's intentions had been before October 1973. I suspect that if he could have made a more concrete case, he would not have been satisfied to instruct us with such enigmatic and exasperating vagueness. Of course, Israel "would have been in a better position to enter negotiations in 1968, in 1969, or, for that matter, in 1972, than it is now." In fact, Israel tried to take advantage of its better position to get some kind of negotiation, especially in the months immediately after the 1967 war. But the Arabs knew that, too, and that is precisely why they did not want to "negotiate." The assumption that all Israel had to do in 1968, in 1969, or in 1972 was to want to negotiate in order to get negotiations going—at least, anything worthy of the name—is really too farfetched to be taken seriously.

In his third paragraph, Mr. Rawin seems to suggest that Israel could have had "an effective disengagement on the Egyptian border" if only she had agreed to withdraw "to the old boundaries of British Palestine." I am not sure whether he means all the old boundaries of British Palestine or only the Egyptian part, as Ambassador Jarring intended. If he means all the old boundaries of British Palestine, that would have left Israel in possession of the entire West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the Egyptian reply to Jarring specifically demanded Israeli withdrawal not only from Sinai but from the Gaza Strip. In effect, Egypt did not accept Jarring's basic proposal any more than Israel did. More important, the Egyptians ended their reply of February 15, 1971 with a general and sweeping demand for "the withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from all the territories occupied since June 5, 1967," which was a very different matter from withdrawing to "the old boundaries of British Palestine." It is a mistake to make the post-October 1973 conditions retroactive to 1971, as if what was done after October 1973 could have been done just as readily two years before. In 1971, both sides were still maneuvering for tactical advantage from familiarly fixed positions; that is what made the Jarring mission an exercise in futility.

There was a symbiotic relationship between Arab intransigence and Israeli maximalism, making it difficult for both sides to escape from a head-on collision. We might agree on that, but first we would have to get rid of the fantasy of Arabs yearning to negotiate if only the Israelis had given them the chance.

The USSR & the Middle East

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Three of Eugene V. Rostow's first four paragraphs contain language escalating the Soviet involvement in the October war ["America, Europe & the Middle East," February]. In his second paragraph Mr. Rostow states that "neither the United States nor Israel could bring itself to conclude that Egypt and Syria would make war. . . ." Thus, one could conclude that Mr. Rostow believes that the Soviets were only indirectly involved as suppliers.

However, in his third paragraph he states that "despite its ill-fated cease-fire for Indochina, the American government resisted the hypothesis that the Soviet Union would approve—and indeed prepare, incite, and encourage—a flagrant act of aggression in the Middle East. . . ." His fourth paragraph goes farther, beginning with an assertion about "the Arab-Soviet

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military attack of October. . . ." I can find no evidence in the remainder of the article that supports these statements.

In his second statement he seems to want us to believe that the Soviets are responsible for the ills of the Indochina cease-fire. I should like to see the hard, supporting evidence. This statement is startling indeed. What direct evidence does he have that the Soviets approved, prepared, incited, and encouraged the Arabs to their flagrant act of October aggression? We know that Soviet resupply operations began before the October war because Soviet ships arrived in Syrian ports within the first week of war and must have been loaded and set sail before the first shot was fired. But this fact is equally consistent with the view that, seeing the Arabs were dead set on the war, reluctantly the Soviets went along for fear that if they did not they would lose their position in the Arab world. Mr. Rostow has provided no direct evidence showing this view is wrong and his is correct.

Finally, I know of no direct evidence showing a Soviet military attack against Israel. It would be most helpful if Mr. Rostow would also supply us with evidence on this most important point.

ARVAL A. MORRIS
University of Washington
School of Law
Seattle, Washington

EUGENE V. ROSTOW writes:

Arval A. Morris asks for evidence on three points raised by or mentioned in my article: 1) Soviet involvement in the attack on Israel of October 6, 1973; 2) Soviet responsibility for preparing, supplying, inciting, and encouraging that attack; 3) Soviet responsibility for the non-enforcement of the cease-fire for Indochina.

I do not find any statement in my article suggesting Soviet "involvement" in the attack of October 6, and in the fighting which ended on October 22 or 23, beyond the passage Mr. Morris quotes, which treats the Soviet Union as an accessory. There were, of course, newspaper reports indicating that a good many thousand Soviet military personnel were directly engaged in the October war—not as front-line troops, but as even more important military actors, preparing operational plans and handling high technology—both in Syria and in Egypt. There were also newspaper reports of North

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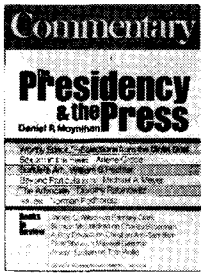

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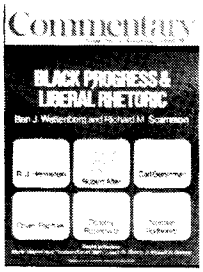

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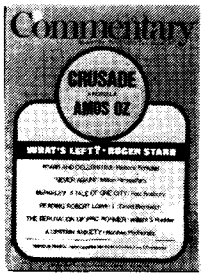

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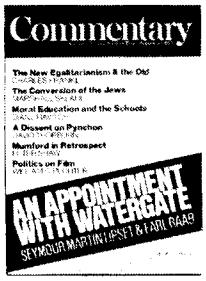
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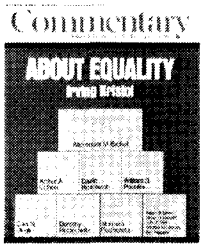

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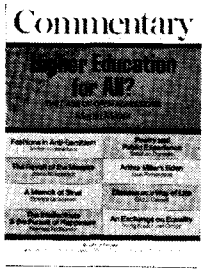

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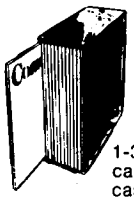

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Korean pilots engaged in combat, and of North Vietnamese handling anti-aircraft weapons. They hardly reached the Middle East without Soviet help. One must assume that Soviet military personnel had full custody at all times of the Soviet nuclear missiles brought into Egypt. And, of course, the Soviet alert which precipitated our own response on October 24 was a direct Soviet military threat, to which my article did refer.

It may be that the publication of our diplomatic documents twenty years hence will not confirm all categories of the information thus far in the public domain on the subject of Soviet participation in the October fighting. Experience with the processes of journalism, and with reading between the lines of press conferences of secretaries of state, would suggest, however, that these particular stories, invariably attributed to "official" and "well-informed" sources in Washington, London, Paris, Cairo, Moscow, and Tel Aviv, are indeed accurate, or close to it.

Mr. Morris asks what "direct" evidence I have that the Soviets approved, prepared, incited, and encouraged the attack of October 6.

First, on preparation. Both Soviet and Arab official statements, to say nothing of the official statements of our own government, confirm that for more than six years before October 6, 1973, the Soviet Union equipped and trained the Egyptian and Syrian armies on a very large and extremely modern scale, not for defense, but for attack as well. Between the fall of 1972 and late September 1973, the shipment of Soviet supplies accelerated in every category at an astonishing rate, leveling off just before the attack, and resuming, as Mr. Morris notes, shortly afterward. At one point the official estimates were that there were between 20,000 and 30,000 Soviet officers in Egypt alone, operating down to the battalion level. In responding to Mr. Morris's question, the best evidence, recalling Holmes's theory of objective intent, is that the Soviet Union intended the natural consequences of what it did. For the period 1967-69, I have the additional evidence of my own official experience with the problem, which fully confirms the published reports.

There is no real dispute in the literature on the subject that the Soviet Union prepared the Arab

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armies for the attack which took place on October 6, 1973—at vast expense to the Soviet Union, and over a prolonged period of time. One of the most striking pieces of "hard" public evidence on the subject is the introduction of highly sophisticated ground-to-air missiles in the Canal area in 1970, in violation of the cease-fire Secretary of State Rogers negotiated upon the failure of Nasser's "war of attrition." The United States protested vigorously at the time, but to no avail.

Secondly, on Soviet encouragement and incitement of the October war. I have as yet seen no public information for the period immediately before the October war quite so spectacular as that about Soviet conduct in inciting the Six-Day War. In 1967, as was brought out in the trial of Field Marshal Amer, as well as in other places, Soviet representatives, including the ambassador to Egypt, officially spread false reports of an imminent Israeli attack on Syria during the period immediately before hostilities erupted. For the 1973 war, I have come across only six kinds of public evidence as to Soviet policy: 1) since 1967, the Soviet Union has refused repeated American suggestions that she persuade or induce Egypt to attend a conference (or any other feasible kind of meeting) at which the peace agreement required by Security Council Resolution 242 could be negotiated, and, in that context, and otherwise, the Soviet Union has equally refused even to discuss the possibility of a Soviet-Western agreement that could limit the supply of arms to the belligerents in the Middle East; 2) it is certain that the Soviet Union had foreknowledge of the 1973 war, for reasons of the kind mentioned by Mr. Morris; 3) the Soviets did not deter or discourage Egypt and Syria, or act with the United States to prevent the war and to promote a peaceful settlement, as is required by the Declaration of Basic Principles signed in Moscow by Nixon and Brezhnev on May 29, 1972; 4) the interesting fact that the Soviets conspicuously removed a large part of their personnel from Egypt shortly before hostilities began, jut as they did before the invasion of South Korea in 1950; 5) the vigorous Soviet diplomacy urging Arab states from Morocco and Algeria to Iraq and Kuwait to join in the fray (see, e.g., New York *Times,* October 10, p. 1, U.S. official sources)—even today, the Soviet Union is urging the Arabs to maintain the oil embargo against the United States; and 6) the obvious Soviet involvement in the elaborate campaign of deception which was conducted so successfully for the three or four months before the aggression of October 6.

The background of recent Soviet policy in the Middle East is fully documented by Uri Ra'anan in his article "Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1969-1973," *Midstream,* December 1973.

As for Mr. Morris's final question, about Soviet responsibility for the non-enforcement of the Indochina cease-fire, I had the opportunity last summer to supplement my reading of American and European materials on the subject in the course of a seven-week trip to eleven countries of the Far East, during which I discussed the problems with officials and private citizens, many of whom were deeply involved or at least fully informed about Indochinese affairs.

The cease-fire agreements of January and March 1973, it will be recalled, rest on the recognition of North and South Vietnam as separate states, and require the North Vietnamese to evacuate Laos and Cambodia, in accordance with the Soviet-American agreements of 1962, which are specifically reaffirmed, and, in effect, to evacuate South Vietnam as well. The future of South Vietnam is expressly committed to the people of South Vietnam, and the North Vietnamese are required to refrain from any political or military interference in the affairs of South Vietnam.

North Vietnam has not even pretended to comply with this agreement, which is guaranteed by the Soviet Union. They are, on the contrary, sending forces into South Vietnam directly, and through Laos and Cambodia, and conducting active operations in all three countries. This process could not continue for a day without Soviet supplies of military equipment in every category. While the Soviet Union frequently reassures East Asians, and Americans, that it will carry out the agreements of 1962 and 1973, it is notable that it never dares to claim that it has met its obligations under them.

The main preoccupation of East Asian intellectuals and officials with whom I talked last summer was whether the United States would insist on the fulfillment of the Indochinese agreements of 1973. For the people of the region, this is the most important question in the world. They have no doubts about the nature and the consequences of Soviet policy in the area. Nor, manifestly, do the Chinese.

Capital Punishment

To the Editor of Commentary:

I am grateful that Joseph W. Bishop, Jr., was able to praise my book, *Cruel and Unusual: The Supreme Court and Capital Punishment* [Books in Review, February], despite his disapproval of the professional spirit which the book describes. But two aspects of his review require comment.

Contrary to Mr. Bishop's suggestion, the lawyers who presented *Furman* v. *Georgia* to the Supreme Court never contended that sentiment toward capital punishment should be measured solely by reference to the views of an elite of opinion leaders. Their argument was subtler—that the public accepted the death penalty only so long as it was not generally applied—and they supported it by pointing out that only a fraction of the men *convicted* of capital crimes were sentenced to death; that those selected to die were chosen without rhyme or reason, unless the reason was race; that opinion polls were an unreliable index of public attitudes in an age of infrequent executions (a development which preceded the capital punishment litigation by some years); and, finally, that the American people would have totally different feelings about the death penalty if it were evenhandedly and generally applied to the necessary tune of several executions a day.

Events subsequent to *Furman* have demonstrated the power of this argument. Though over twenty states have attempted to restore capital punishment, few even have attempted to draft so-called mandatory statutes. The majority of the laws enacted are so clearly subject to the flaws recognized in *Furman* as to suggest they were not written to pass constitutional muster but merely to permit legislators to proclaim that the death penalty was back on the books.

The few statutes which purport to be mandatory are as open to arbitrary administration as the ones they replaced. No state has attempted to remove sentencing discretion in capital cases. Prosecu-

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tors retain plea-bargaining discretion, governors retain the right to commute, and juries retain the power to convict of lesser, non-capital offenses.

I conclude, therefore, that far from favoring evenhanded application of the death penalty, and a frequency of execution unknown here in fifty years, Americans will only tolerate the same old pattern—ritual sacrifice of capriciously-selected victims.

These and other issues dividing Mr. Bishop and myself are at least susceptible of analysis and evaluation. But scholarship suddenly deserts him when he confronts William Kunstler. Though he considers "high-minded" law reformers a more serious threat to the republic, they receive due process. Kunstler is treated to slurs: he is a "specimen"; "a case of acne"; "addlepated"; of questionable competence. Ironically, defamation of this sort undermines Mr. Bishop's ultimate conclusion—that the thing to fear is not radicals but the capacity of the Supreme Court's decision in *Furman* to breed changes in law (the contents of which are nowhere stated) far worse than abolition. On the basis of his reaction to William Kunstler, expressed while reviewing a book which mentions him once in passing, I can only conclude that like Judge Hoffman, Mr. Bishop's fears of Mr. Kunstler are so exaggerated as to be beyond rational discourse.

MICHAEL MELTSNER
Columbia University
School of Law
New York City

JOSEPH W. BISHOP, JR. writes:

I fear that Michael Meltsner read my review with less care than one might have expected of a lawyer and a scholar. I did not say that counsel in *Furman* v. *Georgia* argued that "sentiment toward capital punishment should be measured solely by reference to the views of an elite of opinion leaders." On the contrary, I said that the public-opinion argument was "not available" to them. I attributed the argument "*only*" to Justice Marshall, and I think the extract I quoted from his opinion fully supports the attribution.

I don't know whether Americans would "only tolerate the same old pattern," and I doubt that Mr. Meltsner knows either. My *guess* is that at present a sizable majority of them would tolerate and perhaps welcome mandatory execution of persons convicted of murdering a kidnapped hostage (I wish Mr. Meltsner had seen fit to comment on my suggestion that death may be an appropriate penalty for terrorists who commit murder).

Careful reading of texts, a prerequisite to "rational discourse" and scholarship generally, seems to have completely deserted Mr. Meltsner when his wrath was aroused by my insufficiently respectful remarks on William Kunstler. There is nothing pejorative in the word "specimen"; according to my Webster, it means "a part, or one of a number, intended to show the kind and quality of the whole." Does Mr. Meltsner deny that, in this sense, Kunstler is a specimen of the breed of radical lawyers? I did not say that Kunstler was addlepated (although, in fact, I think he often is), but that some radical lawyers are sometimes so: does Mr. Meltsner deny it? I did question Kunstler's competence; so do many other lawyers. I thought I made it particularly plain that, although I do not much admire Kunstler and his ilk, I have no fear of them, exaggerated or otherwise. I went out of my way to say of the radicals that there was little danger that the courts would ever accept the most pernicious of their doctrines and that "At their worst, the American legal system can stand them, as a healthy man can stand a case of acne. At their best they furnish, at least with great zeal, legal services which poor and unpopular people want and to which they are entitled." Does Mr. Meltsner really think this statement evidences "fears . . . so exaggerated as to be beyond rational discourse"? His trouble cannot be a lack of reading comprehension, for he is a graduate of the Yale Law School. I suspect that Mr. Meltsner sees in my fairly straightforward paragraph, as he sees in the Constitution, not what was in it, but what his preconceptions made him think *ought* to be in it.

Yiddish Literature

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The confusion in Johanna Kaplan's review of *A Crown of Feathers* by Isaac Bashevis Singer and *A Shtetl and Other Yiddish No-*

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vellas edited by Ruth R. Wisse [Books in Review, February] occurs both in detail and in Miss Kaplan's general approach to the subject of Yiddish literature.

First, the details. The author of *Romance of a Horse Thief* is not David but Joseph Opatashu. David, who happens to be a prominent stage and screen actor, is Joseph Opatashu's son. *Romance of a Horse Thief* was published shortly after Joseph Opatashu's literary debut in 1910. At that time he already had acquired a considerable knowledge of American, English, and French literature, but to hint, as Miss Kaplan does, that he was influenced by the Russian-Jewish writer Isaac Babel, who was also starting out at that time, seems a bit farfetched. The name Joseph Opatashu looms high in Yiddish letters not because of his several hundred short stories but because of his great novels: *In Polish Woods, Rabbi Akiba,* and many others. . . .

Miss Kaplan's general approach is also confusing, especially in her evaluation of the place of Yiddish literature in America and specifically with regard to her view that the Jews in Isaac Bashevis Singer's work are commonly regarded as figures of exotica. But to those familiar with Jewish life, whether in antiquity, modern times, or after the Holocaust, the characters of Yiddish literature are neither exotic nor imaginary. In the artistic treatment of such characters the geographic boundary lines vanish as if by magic, especially when the Jewish frame of reference is global and not parochial—an objective eminent Yiddish writers have tried hard to achieve.

This unique condition invalidates Miss Kaplan's contention that Yiddish literature has been without an audience because it has not been translated. The fact is that Singer, like many others, has a Yiddish audience in Israel as well as in America, in France as well as in Canada, in Melbourne and in Johannesburg as well as in Mexico City and Buenos Aires. It might be that some writers do write with an eye to the non-Jewish world, as Sholem Asch sometimes did. But there is a penalty for such transgression: these writers estrange their Jewish audience and in the long run they are also forgotten by the others. . . .

Although Singer's novels are very much illuminated by the lights emanating from Jewish mysticism, learning, and history, his characters are not drawn from the annals of Jewish history. They spring from his rich imagination rooted deeply in Jewish life experience. He knows that the strong and healthy Jacob in *The Slave* is just as Jewish as the ascetic Itche Mattess in *Satan in Goray*. . . .

A little less aloofness and more honest consideration would certainly help dispel the confusion and folly prevalent in some circles that Yiddish novels are either second-hand copies of non-Jewish masters or, in the case of certain unique works, exotic even on the writers' own grounds. Accordingly, Miss Kaplan's quotation from Isaac Bashevis Singer describing the people he writes about—"They lived in the midst of almost all the social movements of their time. Their illusions were the illusions of mankind"—must come as nothing less than a profound revelation. Indeed it is—to some people.

SOL SCHLOSSER
Los Angeles, California

JOHANNA KAPLAN writes:

Sol Schlosser is indeed correct in identifying Joseph, not David, Opatashu as the writer. As for his other objections, however, I must, in all fairness, point out that I did not anywhere suggest that Opatashu was influenced by Isaac Babel, and that since Mr. Schlosser's letter seems to reflect a similar misreading throughout, I can only refer interested readers to my review.

I have only the highest regard for Mr. Schlosser's evident passion for Yiddish literature—its writers and its readers—and would like to suggest that our differences are probably not as great as he somewhat querulously presupposes.

Liberalizing the Churches

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "That Old-Time Religion" [January] James Hitchcock seems to be looking at the top of the triangle instead of at the underlying causes. The major modern-day churches did not become more liberal because of a conviction that this was a morally right position, but from a realization that they were already losing members and that this loss would accelerate in coming years. Seeking to reverse the obvious, they espoused

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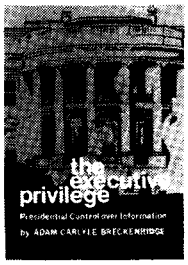

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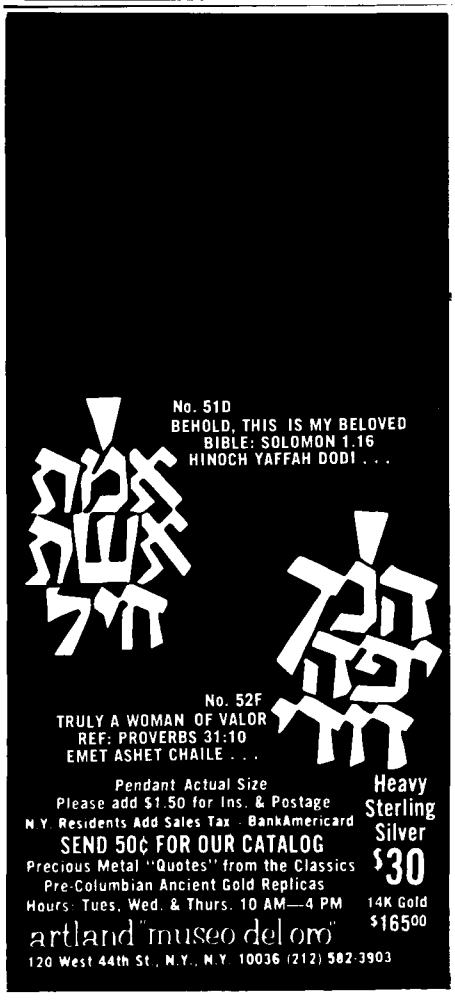
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less restrictive views. Thus, membership losses did not start when more tolerant church views were adopted, but, on the contrary, preceded them. Indeed, if the churches had not liberalized, their membership losses might have been even greater. . . .

BARBARA KRUPIT
Woodbury, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . James Hitchock understands quite well that the static, liberal, emasculated, and structured church is in a serious state of decline. . . . But it is also clear from his article that he has neither knowledge nor understanding of the "old-time religion." Using James Morris's *The Preachers*, he cites as examples of so-called fundamentalism or conservatism a few megalomaniacs whose financial tactics are questionable and he emphasizes their radio and TV popularity. But he does not mention the hundreds of genuine radio and TV programs not connected with these money-mad megalomaniacs. Furthermore, Mr. Hitchcock does not differentiate among cults and denominations. One example: he calls Jehovah's Witnesses a conservative church when he should know that they deny many of the major doctrines of the Christian church. . . .

LYMAN OWEN
Balfour, North Carolina

JAMES HITCHCOCK writes:

To Barbara Krupit: The question of which came first—the liberalization of the churches or the decline in their membership—depends partly of course on what is meant by liberalization. From one standpoint the churches have been liberalizing since the 17th century.

Dean Kelly's figures show, for example, that membership in American Lutheranism did not begin to decline until 1969: Episcopalianism until 1967; Methodism, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism until 1965. Strong "liberal" tendencies were present in all these groups considerably before these dates.

It is doubtless true that, had the churches not liberalized, they would have lost some members who have stayed. However, the statistics suggest that for every person attracted by reforms, several have dropped out. (I do not necessarily infer that people drop out because they find liberalization unpalatable. My own experience suggests that many of those who call most eagerly for reform are among those most likely to drop out once the changes have been enacted. The church merely ceases to interest them.)

The most dramatic case of liberalization preceding membership decline is Roman Catholicism, which in this country did not begin to experience this process until several years after the Second Vatican Council.

To Lyman Owen: an admittedly casual listening to some lesser-known radio preachers gives me the impression that even with many of them money is a major subject. However, I did ask in my review whether Morris's preachers are typical and whether there are not some preachers for whom mercenary considerations are not paramount. I am willing to believe that there are. In my opinion the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses are not orthodox Christians does not preclude their being called a church.

Daniel Berrigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a Catholic who supported Father Berrigan in his resistance to the Vietnam war (even when his spectacular ways were rather jarring), may I say that I admire Robert Alter's restraint in his analysis ["Berrigan's Diatribe," February]. To me, Berrigan's discourse was an occasion of grief. It was not only the total lack of proper documentation, his insufferable choice of an Arab audience before whom to air his reproaches, real or imaginary—what cut me to the quick was that this Christian, this priest for whom I had developed a feeling of friendly respect, could declare, "I am a Jew, in resistance against Israel." There, in a nutshell, he revealed his complete and tragic ignorance of what it means to be a Jew. And this explains his senseless diatribe.

Indeed, we *goyim*, trying to follow Jesus the Jew, may be rightfully called "spiritual Semites," but "Jews" we can never be. To be a Jew, as I dimly perceive, is to share, to feel in one's own flesh and blood, a tradition, a common past, present, and future rooted in a four-thousand-year continuum which brought perennial onslaught to one's own people. "It's very difficult to be a Jew," quipped Jules Isaac in *Jesus and Israel*. One could add, not only with regard to Daniel Berrigan but to all of us Christians, "It's very difficult to be

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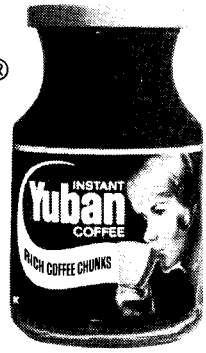

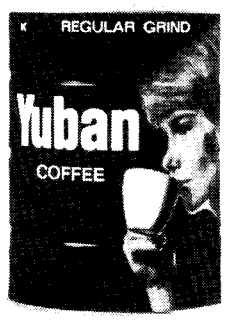

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a Jew's friend," it requires a steadfast and quiet effort at learning.

My hope is that Father Berrigan who, though not an anti-Semite himself, has thoughtlessly unleashed the ferocious hounds of age-old anti-Semitism, will reconsider his attitude, and humbly turn his steps toward Jerusalem and pay a long and fruitful visit to the State of Israel.

CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Whenever one champions the cause of an oppressed people, he lays himself open to misrepresentation. My statement on the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, which I issued in mimeograph in small quantity in Southern California . . . was misrepresented by Robert Alter. The following statement does not support Mr. Alter's charge that I quoted Isaiah 1:14 in order to *justify* the Arab attack upon Israel. Rather, I tried to draw the issue away from the emotionalism of Yom Kippur into the area of reason and conscience:

> The loss of life and property to both sides makes one sad indeed. However, the continuing lesson is that there is no sure ground for peace which is not built on justice. Isaiah stated this well: "The effect of righteousness will be peace" (32:17). To forget this is to cry "Peace! Peace!" when there is no ground for reconciliation or peace. It was Israel's desire to stabilize an unjust status quo which contributed in a large measure to the tensions which exploded into the present conflict. One form of injustice is a sanctification of the status quo; and this touches upon many areas of society, such as race relations in America and South Africa. King Ahab's encounter with Elijah is illuminating. Ahab said: "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" To this Elijah replied: "*You* are the troubler of Israel." By maintaining an unjust society, King Ahab was the troubler, rather than Elijah the nonconformist!
>
> By a curious, invalid logic, the Zionists are saying that the fact that the Arabs struck first this time justifies Israel retroactively for striking first in 1956 and 1967 (which they now admit!). At the latter time, Nasser had dispatched a special envoy to visit in the European capitals and to see President Johnson and to appeal to the United Nations for action which would result in peace; but Israel struck before the envoy (who had reached Rome) could accomplish his task. On behalf of the Arabs one could say that the Israelis taught them the advantage of a "preemptive strike," with this difference, the Arabs have not attacked in force Israel proper, only the conquered territories. If one feels he must defend Israel, does this mean that he must defend the conquests of Israel?
>
> Some, naturally, are saying that to attack on Yom Kippur was an outrage, "a blasphemy." One can understand Jewish feelings on this subject. Yet, it is an even greater blasphemy to celebrate Yom Kippur without ever repenting of the dispossession of the Palestinians and of numerous injustices practiced against the Arabs of both Israel and her occupied territories. As the Lord said through Isaiah:
>
> Your new moons and your appointed feasts
> My soul hates:
> they have become a burden to Me,
> I am weary of bearing them.
> When you spread forth your hands,
> I will hide my eyes from you;
> even though you make many prayers,
> I will not listen;
> your hands are full of blood!
> (1:14-15)
>
> To emphasize rite and ceremony, while forgetting the sanctity of human rights, is the worst blasphemy of all. Often the Church, and not just the Synagogue, has also been guilty of this!
>
> By rushing arms to Israel "to maintain a military balance" we will increase the death and destruction to both sides and run the risk of sparking a world war. One should at least not "throw away his trump card." The sending of arms to Israel should only be undertaken after meaningful concessions on the part of Israel to justice. Arab recognition of Israel can only follow such concessions.

One will not find any "theological anti-Semitism" in the above statement. There is nothing anti-Semitic in Christian theology, but anti-Semites have and do distort this and other things in unjustified attacks upon Jews.

WILLIAM H. BROWNLEE
The Claremont Colleges
Claremont, California

ROBERT ALTER writes:

I am grateful to W.H. Brownlee for supplying readers such ample textual evidence of his own spectacular bias. His little fantasy about Nasser's desperate search for peace in 1967 when Egypt had mobilized its army to attack Israel perfectly illustrates the tenuous connection of his Christian-prophetic zeal with historical fact. For a thoroughly documented account of Nasser's intention to launch an offensive against Israel, I would recommend to Mr. Brownlee's attention an article by Theodore Draper that appeared in this journal, "From 1967 to 1973: The Arab-Israeli Wars" (December 1973). A preemptive strike is one carried out when you know your adversary is preparing an attack and you want to get him before he gets you. That was clearly the case in 1967. That was decidedly *not* the case in 1973.

On a practical level, Mr. Brownlee's eagerness to champion oppressed people led him last October in the midst of a massive Russian resupply of the Arabs to call publicly for a cessation of American arms shipments to Israel until Israel made "meaningful concessions," which I suppose means unconditional withdrawal from all the 1967 territories. What Mr. Brownlee was *in effect* calling for was the destruction of the state of Israel, something he appears incapable of seeing because he seems quite blind to the most basic asymmetry of the Middle East conflict—that Israel is not trying to destroy the Arab states, while the Arabs so far have been unswerving in their commitment to destroy Israel.

As for the quotation of Isaiah to suggest that the attack on Yom Kippur might be a just retribution for Israel's sins and its blasphemous hypocrisy, I will leave it for the reader to judge the implications of such use of Scripture. If it is not theological anti-Semitism, then perhaps a worse name should be invented for it.

Correction

A printer's error occurred in the first sentence on page 32, column 2 of Fritz Stern's essay, "The End of the Postwar Era" (April). The sentence should read: "Another, and very compressed, reading might be that the Palestinian Arabs who in 1948 became refugees from their country had been made to suffer for the crimes of omission and commission that the Europeans had committed against their Jews."—ED.

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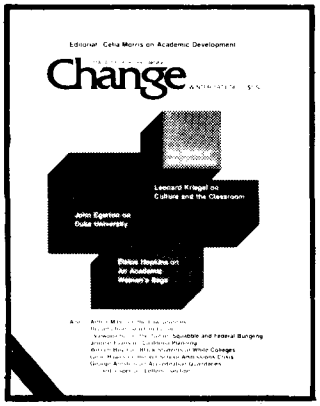

James Reston recently said that "in our national life, we probably have time to deal with most of our problems....At least, the question of military defense for the future is being discussed and debated. Not so the question of education. The balance of power is an active and urgent question in Washington. The balance of minds, the need for an educational defense in the future, is what is being neglected."

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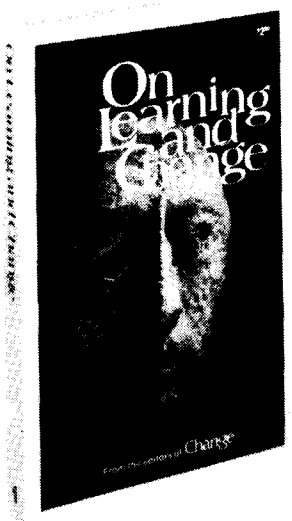

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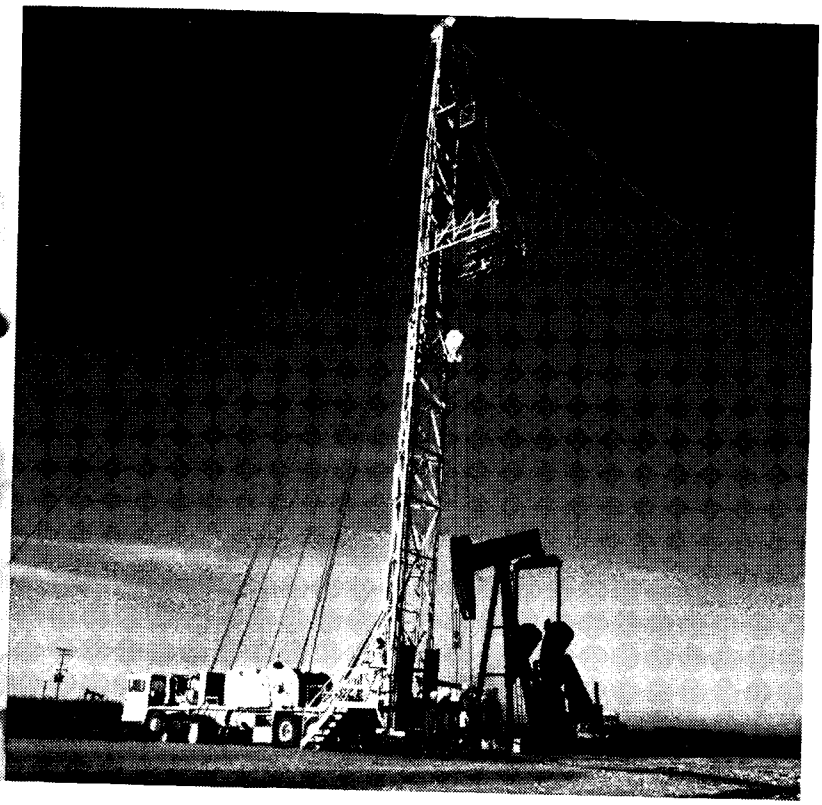

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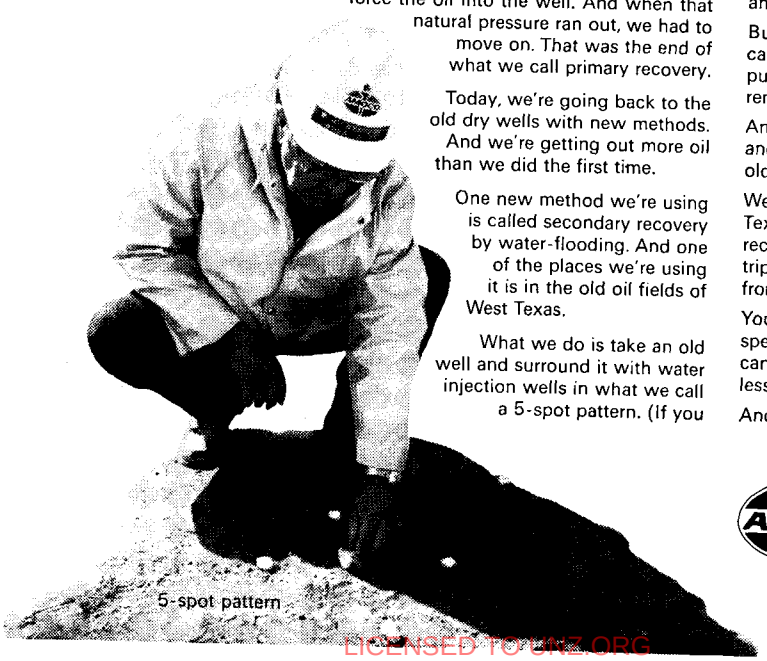

5-spot pattern

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Was Woodrow Wilson Right?

Morality and American Foreign Policy

Daniel P. Moynihan

It is fifty years since Woodrow Wilson died, but it does not seem fifty years: more like two-hundred-fifty. We are uncomfortable with Wilson in the 20th century, he seems more the kind of man who came early rather than late in our national life when of a sudden we were to find that far from being the youngest of governments we had become virtually the oldest. Yet none would disagree that he shaped this century as no other American has done. Herbert Hoover in his last book, *The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson* (they were very alike, Wilson and Hoover, though Hoover was the more prolific author), put it fairly:

> For a moment at the time of the Armistice, Mr. Wilson rose to intellectual domination of most of the civilized world. With his courage and eloquence, he carried a message of hope for the independence of nations, the freedom of men and lasting peace. Never since his time has any man risen to the political and spiritual heights that came to him.

There was no one like him, then; there have been none since. Except perhaps Lenin. That case could be made. Men alike primarily in the way they differed from their own people whom they were nonetheless able to inspire and to mobilize as no leaders before or since have done. But as an American figure, he is singular.

If we do not quite know what to make of Wilson, this is not least because it is still so uncertain what he made of us. The American people, the object of his highest hopes, his strongest passions, were not somehow part of his being. The apocrypha has it that he once began an address to a peace-conference occasion saying that when he thought of mankind he did not think of men in dinner jackets. Which only extends the mystery from what he thought of Americans to what he thought of mankind. It is clear enough that once he entered politics he came more and more to think about the working masses, sweaty in those days and scarcely Calvinist, whose party he was soon to lead. (The International Labor Organization, established by the Versailles Treaty, was by no means, to his thinking, the least of the organizations of the League system. He had contrived for Samuel Gompers to head the commission at Paris which drew up its Charter. The speeches on his great trip through the West in 1919 are remembered as explanations and defenses of the Covenant of the League. But he also spoke repeatedly of the ILO, asking that more heed be paid to the charter of rights for the working man embedded in the peace settlement. In turn the inclusion of the ILO had more to do with the defeat of the treaty in the Senate than standard histories are so far wont to record.) He came to think, surely, of mankind as including persons who spoke languages other than English (although not necessarily those who spoke English with an Irish accent). And in his Western speeches he would say so with a candor—engaging and unashamed—now quite foreign to American public life.

"Do you know where Azerbaijan is?" he asked his audience, speaking of the Paris peace conference in San Francisco on September 18, 1919:

> Well, one day there came in a very dignified and interesting group of gentlemen from Azerbaijan. I did not have time until they were gone to find out where they came from, but I did find this out immediately, that I was talking to men who talked the same language that I did in respect of ideas, in respect of conceptions of liberty, in respect of conceptions of right and justice. . . .

It is at such points, of course, that one inclines to quarrel with Wilson: how can he ask us to believe that he believed such things? Worse: what if indeed he did? And for a new generation influenced, if at all, by Wilson, then at most by what I should suppose is now an attenuated Wilsonianism, there are vastly greater difficulties with his concluding assertion:

Daniel P. Moynihan is currently serving as the United States Ambassador to India. His books include *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income, Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding*, and, most recently, *Coping*, a collection of essays which contains several pieces originally published in Commentary. An earlier version of the present article was read this past February at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the death of Woodrow Wilson.

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> And I did find this out, that the Azerbaijanis were, with all the other delegations that came to see me, metaphorically speaking, holding their hands out to America and saying, "You are the disciples and leaders of the free world; can't you come and help us?"

I suppose there are among us those who would be willing to advise the Azerbaijanis on the correct pricing policies for crude oil. But for the rest . . . no, we fall back in disbelief—even such as I, taught, if anything, to move forward in acceptance.

What then does it matter what he thought of mankind? It matters because therein resides the essence of his quest for legitimacy in the world order, a quest which still eludes us, and which, if I am not altogether wrong, honesty requires that we acknowledge cannot any longer be successfully pursued in strictly Wilsonian terms. Wilson's vision of a world order was a religious vision: of the natural goodness of man prevailing through the Holy Ghost of Reason. The beliefs from which this vision came, while still widespread and deeply felt among individuals, are no longer seen to imply political belief as well. Wilson in that sense speaks to us with a diminishing, ever more distant voice. And yet a distinct one to which today we need to listen again.

He died, as recorded, in Washington in 1924, but of course he died in the public sense five years earlier on his way back from Pueblo, Colorado, when he suffered an incapacitating stroke. He was only once ever again to speak in public, on Armistice Day in 1923, a short while before the final end. The Pueblo speech deserves to be reread. It is surely a premonition, an evocation almost, of death. A speech from the cross. A speech, to be sure, by a Presbyterian St. Jerome, contesting texts to the very end, but a Passion withal. It is a premonition of his own death, and a prophecy, I suppose, of the death of the Western civilization that would not be saved. Excepting always that those who believed would be saved, the city would not be saved: the city would be lost to war and rumors of war.

The biblical cadence, the New Testament ecstasy in that extempore speech are as moving as anything in the language of the American Presidency:

> Again and again, my fellow citizens, mothers who lost their sons in France have come to me and taking my hand, have shed tears upon it not only, but they have added, "God bless you, Mr. President." Why, my fellow citizens, should they pray God to bless me? I advised the Congress of the United States to create the situation that led to the death of their sons. I ordered their sons overseas. I consented to their sons being put in the most difficult parts of the battle line, where death was certain, as in the impenetrable difficulties of the forest of Argonne. Why should they weep upon my hand and call down the blessings of God upon me? Because they believe that their boys died for something that vastly transcends any of the immediate and palpable objects of the war. They believe and they rightly believe that their sons saved the liberty of the world. They believe that wrapped up with the liberty of the world is the continuous protection of that liberty by the concerted powers of all civilized people. They believe that this sacrifice was made in order that other sons should not be called upon for a similar gift—the gift of life, the gift of all that died—and if we did not see this thing through, if we fulfilled the dearest present wish of Germany and now dissociated ourselves from those alongside whom we fought in the war, would not something of the halo go away from the gun over the mantlepiece or the sword? Would not the old uniform lose something of its significance? These men were crusaders. They were not going forth to prove the might of the United States. They were going forth to prove the might of justice and right, and all the world accepted them as crusaders, and their transcendent achievement has made all the world believe in America as it believes in no other nation organized in the modern world. There seems to me to stand between us and the rejection or qualification of this treaty the serried ranks of those boys in khaki, not only these boys who came home, but those dear ghosts that still deploy upon the fields of France.

He tells of visiting a cemetery in France where French women tended American graves:

> France was free and the world was free because America had come. I wish some men in public life who are now opposing the settlement for which these men died could visit such a spot as that. I wish that the thought that comes out of those graves could penetrate their consciousness. I wish that they could feel the moral obligation that rests upon us not to go back on those boys, but to see the thing through, to see it through to the end and make good their redemption of the world. For nothing less depends upon this decision, nothing less than the liberation and salvation of the world.

What is one to make of this? Was he right? We have almost given up asking such questions, much less answering. But this, surely, is clear. It was very late in the history of the West to put any large public question in such terms. Carl J. Friedrich and Charles Blitzer are correct, surely, that with the religious revival of the 17th century, and the wars of that century, "Once again, and for the last time, life was seen as meaningful in religious, even theological, terms. . . ." For the last time.

But was he right? In 1944, a quarter-century after the Pueblo speech, when we seemed well

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into the hideous future Wilson had foreseen, Gerald W. Johnson asked this question:

> It is not a pleasant idea, for if he was right, the rest of us were wrong. . . . Dead men scattered from the Solomon Islands to Italy suggest that we may have been wrong. Fine ships by hundreds shattered and sunk suggest that we may have been wrong. Billions upon uncounted billions wrung from our toil; mourning in every city and town, in crowded tenements and lonely farmhouses, weeping women and prematurely old men . . . suggest that we may have been wrong.

And "those dear ghosts that still deploy upon the fields of France"—what do they suggest?

Events up until the time Johnson wrote, and in the three decades since, suggest at the very least that the United States remains as uncertain as ever about the terms on which the then President of the United States helped, first, to set in motion an extraordinary world dynamic of political independence accompanied by a rhetoric of personal freedom; and sought, secondly, to establish a world order which, by legitimating and channeling these forces, would sufficiently contain them. Events suggest further that having failed, or having insufficiently succeeded, in the second effort, the United States has commenced to recede in its commitment to the first. The events in this instance are better known than the argument to be made for them, for indeed the argument lies essentially in the acceptance of the seemingly ineluctable events. If the Wilsonian thesis was too wordy, a shade too eager to persuade, its antithesis stands in something very like "dumb insolence"—a serious charge in British courts martial, not least because it is so difficult to prove and impossible to bear. In a word, events increasingly persuade us to act as if Wilson were wrong.

Our susceptibility to such doubts goes far back. Wilson as President failed, did he not?: never good for a reputation. More importantly perhaps, for Americans, as in the course of the 1920's the person emerged from the President, it came to be seen that the person himself was not without failings. Johnson writes: "He was full of faults. They stuck out like spines upon a cactus . . . he was arrogant . . . bullheaded . . . puritanical . . . vengeful . . . icy . . . blistering." His racial attitudes were certainly deplorable. At times he displayed a measure of selfless devotion to political gain such as to qualify as a case history in Puritan aberration. In this regard, his speeches just before entering active politics as Democratic candidate for Senator from New Jersey in 1907 are of textbook quality. Addressing the Southern Society at the Waldorf Astoria, he feared that "America has fallen to the commonplace level of all the other nations" because she had abandoned her egalitarian ideals. "When she ceases to believe that all men shall have equal opportunity she goes back upon the principle on which the nation was founded." And how best to have equal opportunity? By not discriminating. Which is to say by not having a graduated income tax. "There is only one sort of taxation that is just, and that is taxation that does not discriminate." Or redistribute income: "I know of only one legitimate object of taxation, and that is to pay the expenses of the government." ("Woodrow Wilson attacks paternalism," went the New York *Times* headline, "Government Can't Do Everything, He Tells Southern Society.")

Familiar stuff. In office, of course, he became a guarded advocate of graduated taxes, and devised more than a few new ways of spending them. There are words for such behavior and they are directed, with no special impact, to most public men. The craft of President ordains a certain craftiness. But Wilson had rather implied that he was not to be measured by any such standards. The greater the shock, then, when the doings at Versailles began to leak out, as inevitably they were to do, and it became unavoidably clear that in dealing with leaders of the Allied Powers Wilson, in order to win the Covenant, had accepted many more "lesser evils"—Hoover's term—than were ever proposed in the way of reservations to the Treaty of Versailles which the moderate Senators had held out for and with which it would have been ratified. In a word, he did for Clemenceau what he would not do for Senator Frank B. Kellogg or Senator Porter J. McCumber; he was willing to bend a principle for Lloyd George, but not for Robert A. Taft or Elihu Root or Charles Evans Hughes.

Further and fatefully, a kind of corrupt Wilsonianism carried on as a dominant theme of American foreign policy for years after him. The Republicans who took over scarcely abandoned his ideals. To the contrary, the 1920's were nothing if not the era of American-inspired disarmament conferences and treaties renouncing war as an instrument of national policy. The problem was that, as with the Great Experiment itself, the men in power were willing to proclaim the ideals but not to enforce them. Or, some would say, to proclaim ideals that were unenforceable. It comes to much the same thing: irresponsibility. In what must surely be the best writing yet on this subject, Ernest W. Lefever has given the name of moralism to this kind of irresponsibility; it is, he says, the corruption of the foreign-policy traditions of both "rational idealism" and "historical realism," of Tom Paine and Walt Whitman on the one hand, Burke and Madison on the other. Moralism evades both of these moral traditions. Morality is a synonym for responsibility. Moralism is a conscious or unconscious escape from accountability.

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There is first of all in this mutant a fundamental hostility to authority. "The soft moralistic view tends to distrust the state, especially its coercive power, while Western ethical thought affirms the necessity of the state and insists on the responsible use of its power." In another variant, it sets the most unavailing of all criteria for worth: "Soft moralism tends to associate virtue with weakness, just as it associates vice with power." Whence the lunging forward to do good and the reeling back when it is learned what will be required—"This strange combination," to continue Lefever, "of reform-intervention and security-isolation [which] turns foreign policy on its head." The first task of foreign policy in what we would hope to be our ethical tradition is peace and security. Moralism substitutes—for this—the modes and objectives of internal policy to the disadvantage, even denigration, of first things. When it fails, moralism will typically prefer no foreign policy to a necessary one.

The reform-intervention phase of this mindset became manic in the years just after the period in which Gerald Johnson wrote. From Lake Success onward to about the Bay of Pigs, it seemed at times almost to prevail (again with Republicans succeeding to and acquiescing in a kind of Democratic heresy). A necessary counter-argument was made by men such as George Kennan, and before the era was over "Wilsonian idealism" had become synonymous with dangerous nonsense: the prattle of soft and privileged people in a hard and threatening world. Vietnam, with its own sequence of "reform-intervention" and "security-isolation," appeared all the more to confirm the folly of that world view. That the subsequent "neo-isolationist" argument came so often from precisely those who had earlier made the case for intervention seemingly settled the matter: a tendency of thought, a tone of voice, a tintinnabulation of the school-yard bells that we had best as grown-ups put behind us.

But this was a corruption of Wilson. Surely we can accept that now, what with the naiveté of the Kellogg-Briand treaties behind us and the worst of the cold-war obsessions also, and with the United Nations over to one side, doing what it does and about what it can do. The essential Wilson remains, the Wilson whose singular contribution to the American national experience was a definition of patriotism appropriate to the age America was entering at the time of his Presidency, which is to say patriotism defined first of all as the duty to defend and, where feasible, to advance democratic principles in the world at large. (In this he expanded the original—and singular—American definition of citizenship as a matter not of blood or soil or religious faith, but of adherence to political norms.) Always to defend them—prudently if possible, but at the risk, if need be, of imprudence.

One suspects this came easily to Wilson in an intellectual sense: Scotch-Irish, his father a Presbyterian minister, his mother a Presbyterian minister's daughter, in whom, Richard Hofstadter wrote, the Calvinist spirit burned with a bright and imperishable flame. "Their son learned to look upon life as the progressive fulfillment of God's will and to see man as a 'distinct moral agent' in a universe of moral imperatives." His belief in his country was an extension, a secularization I suppose, of his belief in his God, a belief of concreteness and content virtually absent from the Presidency since. (Kennedy, however, believed in God. I think this to be true, although I do not know it. It rather embarrassed some of those around him, for it had become unfamiliar in the Presidency, even awkward. At the time a member of the White House staff assured me that he was not really a Catholic, but, well, like a Unitarian.)

The American people in the aggregate appear to retain their religious beliefs and practices very much intact. But such conviction has all but evanesced among political elites in the United States much as it has done, for example, in Britain. And in the absence of religious conviction, it is not possible to establish an obligation of the Wilsonian kind to the state. Our elites accept the state rather as Margaret Fuller accepted the universe, and it might be said of them what Carlyle said of her: By gad, they had better. If, for Wilson, the properly directed state was an instrument of his Calvinist God, then obviously for Wilson patriotism, however physically demanding, posed no intellectual problems. But it does pose intellectual problems for the American and British political elites today: it is, verily, a crisis of faith.

There remains, however, in both countries—and very much in both countries—a strong ethical sense with respect to public matters, a sense of justice and procedure, a feeling for law, which is wholly serviceable as a belief system around which to organize a national life. What was missing then and is missing now is the dimension of duty. Again, it appears as a problem not so much of people in general as of elites. Hofstadter describes Wilson as "the preacher of a mission of world service to the most insular and provincial people among all the great powers." He could have added—and would have done, I think, had the point been raised—that Wilson succeeded to a considerable extent in this mission. The American people were with him on the Covenant, as were, overwhelmingly, the peoples with whom he was in touch abroad. If survey research tells us anything, it is that this conversion, warts and backsliding and all, is very much intact a half-century later.

It may be noted in this connection that of all the institutions of American public life, the one

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which has never wavered in its Wilsonian commitment is the one perhaps most expressive of the popular ethos—the labor movement. Presidents have come and gone, and the labor movement has disagreed with most of them on these matters, and shows not the least distress at having done so. One does not know how long this will continue. It may be a generational phenomeon. But so long as it does continue, the American labor delegates to the annual International Labor Conference will insist, for example, that a free trade union is what Samuel Gompers and his associates thought to be a free trade union when they drafted the ILO Charter in Paris in 1919, and only that, and that no necessity or convenience of state has any power to make them pretend that a captive trade union is a free trade union. None. The case could generally be made that the mass of the American people has remained substantially loyal to the standard Wilson raised. It is the others who come and go.

This is the kind of thing Wilson knew. He was a learned man. He knew, for example, that you could trust Gompers, who for his part told an audience in Paris, doubtless also in dinner jackets, "You do not know how safe a thing freedom is." (Oh for the age when English was spoken.) Wilson knew that the most distinctive fact of the American polity was the degree to which it had informed the thought and action of ordinary citizens with a conception of patriotism that elsewhere, in democratic nations no less than autocratic ones, was rare to the point of being a preserve of privilege.

In his Southern Society speech of 1907—reflecting the frame of mind in which he forsook the academy for politics—Wilson took patriotism for his topic, quoting Tennyson's lines:

> A nation still, the rulers and the ruled:
> Some sense of duty,
> Something of a faith,
> Some reverence of the laws ourselves
> have made,
> Some patient force to change them
> when we will,
> Some civic manhood, firm against
> the crowd.

"Patriotism, properly considered," he said, "is not a mere sentiment; it is a principle of action, or rather is a fine energy of character and of conscience operating beyond the narrow circle of self-interest." Then an unusual point, as if to emphasize how explicit he meant to be. "Every man should be careful to have an available surplus of energy over and above what he spends upon himself and his own interests, to spend for the advancement of his neighbors, of his people, of his nation." That the specter of statism hovers about such words need not be contested. It always will, when attachment to the state rather than mere submission is proposed. But the state as an extension of the moral force and responsibility of the individual is a different thing from the state as the mere monopoly of force. The Wilsonian state might properly claim its tithe in energy and resource (whether or not raised by graduated income taxes!).

This at least is not moralism, it does not discover virtue in weakness. It argues, rather, the unique and necessary virtue of strength, of men and women becoming all they are capable of being, beyond anything accorded them as possible in the past. For, said Wilson, it was in America that the ordinary citizen was first "put in the way" of such "statesmanlike thinking."

> I like to recall that passage of de Tocqueville's in which he marvels with eloquent praise at the variety of information and excellence of discretion which our polity did not hesitate to demand of its people, its common people. It is in this, rather than in anything we have invented by way of governmental forms, that we have become distinguished among the nations, by what we expect of ourselves and of each other.

Is it a sustainable vision? Hard to say. The history of this century is that of men and women enduring the most awful trials in pursuit of visions every bit as secular, differing only in their willingness to submerge the individual in the mass. Wilson argues the elevation of the individual, the differentiation of each. It may be more than we can do: but this very thought, so much a product of the events that followed Wilson, is the essential case for trying. And the context for any such effort remains exactly that which Wilson first perceived: the worldwide struggle between free societies and those not free.

Wilson conceived of patriotism not as an instrument of the state, but as an expression and extension of the moral capacities of the individual, specifically of men seeking freedom in its many manifestations. He saw that in the age then commencing such a patriotism would be meaningful only as it manifested itself in a world setting, engaging its energies in a world struggle. Democracy in one country was not enough simply because it would not last. In 20th-century America Wilsonianism has been disparaged for enthusiasm, much as high Anglicans disapproved of the Methodists of 18th-century England. And yet the Methodists, had they been ordained, almost surely would have kept the English people in the church, and possibly also their bishops. Instead the people wandered away into nothingness. Does not the American faith in democracy face something of this dilemma, and are we not adopting much the same course at the silent behest of men who know too much to believe anything in particular and opt instead for accommodations of reasonableness and urbanity that drain our world position of moral purpose?

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It may be that no other leadership is coming our way and we will have to make do. But before becoming too accepting, or admiring, of the course events are taking, we still have time, surely, to consider where such a course is likely to lead. Granted, we may end up alive: no small virtue in a policy, explicit or implied. But we shall also very likely end up lonely, which is no small disadvantage.

It comes to this: the Wilsonian world view is already half achieved. Most peoples of the world live in independent states demarcated along lines of hoped-for ethnic legitimacy. This very achievement makes for intense difficulties with the remaining internal ethnic divisions. Nevertheless the principle of self-determination has not only succeeded at the level of a norm but has also largely been implemented.

The quality of the incumbent regimes is another matter. Few measure up to Wilson's hopes. Numerically there are not many more democracies now than in 1919 (although of the two additions to this short list, India and Japan are scarcely insubstantial). Even so, most of the other regimes dare not speak of themselves except in terms of Wilsonian ideals. In other words, these ideals—seen widely as American ideals—still establish the internal right to govern, just as, equally, Wilsonian ideals establish the national right to exist.

Does this not impose a duty? Wilson would have thought it did. Not many do today. Very well, then, does it not at the very least make a certain claim on our calculations—namely, that it is not a circumstance likely to go away, and like it or not, it is going to influence, even dictate, a great many things we shall find ourselves doing, even as it does already? The reason for this is quite external to the political eschatology of Wilsonianism. It resides, rather, in a political reality for which he had no little distaste: that of a multi-ethnic population. We are a nation of nations and inextricably involved in the fate of other peoples the world over.

This was already wholly clear at the time Wilson governed, although he does not give the impression of having understood just what forces his principles of self-determination of nations had set off within his own nation. Indeed, he saw perhaps too many Azerbaijanis in Paris (one could wish he had got to know Ho Chi Minh, who was then busy about the conference) and perhaps too few Irish in Washington. The loss of Irish support damaged the prospect of the Covenant—and scarcely improved the peace treaty, if self-determination was what it was supposed to be about. Less noticed at the time, the first armed rebellion (the Ghadar rebellion) against British rule in India had been planned in Stockton, California among immigrant Sikhs in the early years of the war, and after aborting in India itself, was prosecuted by the American government when the United States entered the war.

But offsetting these losses was the support of all those Central-European nationalities whose homelands gained independence through the treaty, such as the Republic of Czechoslovakia which was formally proclaimed in Pittsburgh during those months. This was a foretaste of the pressures to which American foreign policy would be subject in the years of world-power status to come. The reality has exceeded any expectations and will in all probability go on doing so, for while the matter has not received much attention, the United States is quietly but rapidly resuming its role as a nation of first- and second-generation immigrants, almost the only one of its kind in the world, incomparably the largest, and for the first time in our history or any other, a nation drawn from the entire world. The Immigration Act of 1965 drastically altered the shape of American immigration and increased its size. (I should not be surprised if one-third of the population increase of the United States today consists of first-generation immigrants or their children.) Our immigrants in wholly unprecedented proportions come from Asia, South America, and the Caribbean. (In fiscal year 1973 the ten top visa-issuing posts were Manila, Monterrey, Seoul, Tijuana, Santo Domingo, Mexico City, Naples, Guadalajara, Toronto, Kingston. I would expect Bombay to make this top-ten list before long. By the end of the century there should be a million Asian Indians in the United States—unless, that is, the Secretary General of the United Nations is successful with his recent proposal that a world-wide system of emigration taxes be established in order, somehow, to benefit the underdeveloped nations.)

In short, by the end of the century, given present trends, the United States will be a multi-ethnic nation the like of which even we have never imagined. This means at least one thing. There will be no struggle for personal liberty (or national independence or national survival) anywhere in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America which will not affect American politics. In that circumstance, I would argue that there is only one course likely to make the internal strains of consequent conflicts endurable, and that is for the United States deliberately and consistently to bring its influence to bear on behalf of those regimes which promise the largest degree of personal and national liberty. We shall have to do so with prudence, with care. We are granted no license to go looking for trouble, no right to meddle. We shall have to continue to put up with things obnoxious about which there is nothing we can do; and often we may have to restrain ourselves where there are things we can do. Yet we must play the hand dealt us: we stand for lib-

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erty, for the expansion of liberty. Anything less risks the contraction of liberty: our own included.

It is not likely to be a formally welcomed role. The political elites of most of the world are poisonously anti-American, and will remain so while the spell of Marxism and the British universities —what Orwell cited as the "right Left people"— persists. This circumstance is well known and much noted. Our own intellectuals are becoming demoralized, even victimized, by it (although I should think such influence will much diminish over the next thirty years or so). Less well-known is the parallel circumstance that the peoples of the world remain extraordinarily faithful to Wilsonian ideals, no longer much if at all associated with him, but still widely associated with the United States and giving every sign of persisting. Among these peoples, I count the American people: not as an act of piety or wishfulness but rather, and assertively, as a fact repeatedly established by voting behavior and opinion research. Wilson's photographs are nowhere to be seen, but in the working-class homes of Pittsburgh, in the barrios of Bogotá, in the mud villages of South India, portraits of John F. Kennedy will be found next to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or Bolívar, or, as I have once seen, Gandhi, for Kennedy too was in the Wilson tradition. It is not the only tradition of American foreign policy, and that it can be an aberrant one no one any longer questions. But that we lose it at the risk of the ethical integrity of the nation ought not to be questioned either.

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The Real Solzhenitsyn

Jeri Laber

THE full text of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Open Letter to the Soviet Leaders* was first published on March 3 by the London *Times*, which described it as "a testament of astonishing power, with uncanny relevance to our own problems in the West." In its introduction the *Times* glossed over the authentically reactionary nature of Solzhenitsyn's political statements. Those who *have* remarked upon it have done so with surprise. Many Western admirers of his fight against despotism had considered Solzhenitsyn an advocate of liberal values and had, until the publication of the *Open Letter*, refused to acknowledge what should have been evident from a careful reading of his fiction and his earlier political pronouncements. Steeped in a mysticism distinctively Russian, shaped by circumstances peculiarly Soviet, Solzhenitsyn has evolved a unique, eccentric viewpoint. It is worth trying to understand, both for what it tells us about him and in order to revise certain faulty Western perceptions of recent Soviet events.

I

WHEN he was arrested in 1945 for criticizing Stalin in a letter from the front, Solzhenitsyn was twenty-seven years old, a gifted mathematician and a capable, respected artillery officer. He had yet to become aware of the full vindictiveness of Stalin's rule. If anything, his outlook and training, by his own admission, might very well have led him to become one of the executioners. Instead, he became a victim and was sent to prison. He emerged after eight years of forced labor, only to be engulfed by a new sentence: "exile for life" in a remote South Kazakhstan desert town. There he became seriously ill with cancer. Once again he confronted pain and the likelihood of death; once again he survived, quite miraculously cured. In 1956, three years after Stalin's death, he was "rehabilitated"; after eleven years, he was free.

At thirty-eight, Solzhenitsyn was an ex-prisoner, an outcast, alone. His mother had died during the war, and his wife had divorced him and remarried. He had no job to return to, nor had he even committed to paper the novels, plays, and poems he had composed and stored in his head during his years of imprisonment.

He had emerged from prison with two passions: an intense, mystical fixation upon Russia and her suffering people, and an abhorrence of Soviet Marxism. While in prison he had become a very religious man. He saw the ordeals that he had survived as trials devised by God to strengthen his moral character. His future fame, thus, was ordained; he had been "chosen" for a mission: to expose the terrors of Soviet violence. Years later, in his *Nobel Lecture on Literature*, he said:

> I have climbed my way to this lectern from which the Nobel Lecture is read . . . out of the dark and the cold where I WAS FATED TO SURVIVE and where others, who possessed perhaps greater talent and were stronger than I, perished.

Solzhenitsyn was in official favor for a short-lived period, coinciding more or less with the rise and fall of Nikita Khrushchev in the Kremlin. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, a fictionalized account of prison life and the book which brought Solzhenitsyn instant international fame, was published in 1962; aside from a few short stories, it is the only work of his that has been issued in the USSR. And by 1966 he had become a "nonperson." No reference was made to him in journals or the press, his name was excised from reference books and literary histories, and his few published writings vanished from bookstores and library shelves. He was to be ignored until he could be disposed of, quietly.

It was then that he began an active campaign to increase his public exposure, counting upon sympathetic world opinion to protect him from official wrath. The furthering of his cause thus gained added significance; it became, in itself, a means of self-preservation. His public statements were more frequent and more forceful, planned with military precision, timed to coincide with specific political events and introduced in ways that would insure the greatest amount of Western press coverage and publicity. A New York *Times* photographer for whom he posed described how Solzhenitsyn assumed a serious expression, "evidently thinking of his world image." For the first time he joined with others—men like Andrei Sakharov and Zhores Medvedev—in protesting the abuse of civil rights in the USSR.

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In all this, Solzhenitsyn was evidently preparing himself for martyrdom. As early as 1967 he declared that "no one can bar the road to truth, and to advance its cause I am prepared to accept even death." At a tempestuous writers' meeting in 1969 he read the same words again, underscoring what then began to seem like a self-fulfilling prophecy, and he repeated another of his statements, that he would "fulfill [his] duty as a writer . . . from the grave even more successfully and more irrefutably than in [his] lifetime." Last September he told Soviet leaders that he was "prepared to sacrifice [his] life."

Solzhenitsyn notified Western reporters that he might die mysteriously at the hands of the KGB. He advised them that he had sent unpublished works to the West with instructions to publish them should he die. The reference was to *Gulag Archipelago,* his exhaustive and momentous indictment of the Soviet prison-camp network. The recent publication of *Gulag* in the West was of course not triggered by Solzhenitsyn's death but by the suicide of a Leningrad woman who had turned a copy of the manuscript over to the KGB after five days of brutal questioning. Once the contents of *Gulag* were known to the secret police, there was no reason to delay its publication further. "In this act of seizure," Solzhenitsyn said, "I saw the hand of God. It meant the time had come."

After *Gulag* was published in Paris, Solzhenitsyn's position became untenable. "I and my family are ready for anything," he said in January of this year. "I have fulfilled my duty to those who perished and this gives me relief and peace of mind." His message was heard throughout the world: he was prepared for a martyr's fate—arrest, a trial, imprisonment, even death. His wife's first reaction, on being told that he was safe in Germany after his arrest, was: "It's a great misfortune."

Mrs. Solzhenitsyn's spontaneous response may sound strange to Western readers, accustomed as they are to the idea that human life is a supreme value, the willing sacrifice of it evidence of irrationality or worse. Moreover, the post-Freudian concept of human complexity lays even heroic behavior open to scrutiny. We question the existence of "pure virtue" or "pure evil," and are suspicious of the motives of anyone who claims moral purity for himself.

This is not Solzhenitsyn's view of human nature. Like the characters in his novels, people for him are essentially good or bad. And the unwavering self-assurance with which he has pursued his own goal demonstrates Solzhenitsyn's personal identification with "the righteous"—a very select company. Unlike Tolstoy, who believed that wisdom was to be found by "going to the people," Solzhenitsyn believes in the "spiritual superiority of *certain* people." Thus, Nerzhin, the hero of *The First Circle,* having shared the life of "the people" in the camps, "not as a condescending and therefore alien gentleman, but as one of them," discovers that "the People had no homespun superiority to himself." Most of them lacked "that personal *point of view* which becomes more precious than life itself."

That "point of view," according to Solzhenitsyn, arises out of hardship and suffering: through suffering "one must try to temper, to cut, to polish one's soul so as to become *a human being.*" Success depends not on social origins but on strength and moral fervor. "The cultivation of one's soul," Solzhenitsyn has said, "is more important than the well-being of countless future generations." This he learned from the hardships of his own life, and it is this which he believes qualifies him for membership in the spiritual elite.

II

Despite differences between them, Solzhenitsyn's concern with the suffering of the Russian people reflects the commanding influence of Tolstoy on his life and his writings. Solzhenitsyn's beard, his humble dress, his disdain for material possessions, his love of hard labor, and his almost ascetic style of life are all "Tolstoyan." There are parallels as well between Solzhenitsyn's public role in Russia and the role played by Tolstoy in his time. And Tolstoy's literary influence is evident in all of Solzhenitsyn's work, reaching extreme proportions in *August 1914,* in which whole episodes are modeled on scenes from *War and Peace* and many characters are no more than latter-day simplifications of the Rostovs and the Bolkonskys. Tolstoy dominates the content of the book, too: his pictures adorn the walls of bourgeois homes, his views are followed and debated, and, in a hopelessly stereotyped scene, Tolstoy himself appears, sententiously preaching about "good" and "love."

As a novelist, however, Solzhenitsyn is no Tolstoy. In later life Tolstoy renounced his earliest (and greatest) novels, alleging that they contradicted his teachings. As his writing became increasingly didactic, it was saved from utter tediousness only by his monumental talent as an artist. It may, in fact, be said that what accounts for the incredible vitality of Tolstoy's work is the conflict between his intuitive sensibilities and his conscious goals. This conflict does not exist for Solzhenitsyn. His work, for the most part, is didactic, as he intends it to be, and it is often dull and ponderous.

Soviet readers, however, brought up on the aridities of socialist realism, have been electrified by Solzhenitsyn's concern with what he calls "eternal values" and his dealing with such forbidden themes as Stalinist terror. Zhores Medvedev, in his recent, quietly affecting tribute to Solzhenitsyn, *Ten Years After Ivan Denisovich,** has described reading *The First Circle* in one twenty-four-hour sitting, "stopping at intervals for cups

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of black coffee." Medvedev points out that since everyone in Soviet society has been touched in some way by terror, "many people read his books several times over . . . mentally experiencing them so acutely that they failed to notice, or ignored, subtlety of style. . . ." Although Medvedev considers Solzhenitsyn a writer of unquestionable stature, he does admit that in the case of *August 1914*, which did not have such extra-literary interest, even some Soviet readers were more critical.

The situation is different in the West, where Solzhenitsyn is probably one of the least read of best-selling novelists. Despite the inflated praise he has received from Western reviewers, whose admiration for Solzhenitsyn's courage is often mistakenly expressed as esteem for his works, many Western readers appear to find his novels heavy-handed, humorless, and monotonous. Solzhenitsyn's characters lack dimension: his heroes are all passive, prisoners not so much of themselves as of immutable circumstance. The political and philosophical theories for which the novels serve as vehicles are oversimplified and irritatingly presented with a repetitious, self-indulgent verbosity. His works often seem like morality plays, with each character representing a specific abstract idea. This is why *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the least ambitious of Solzhenitsyn's writings, is in some ways the most successful: it *is* a morality play.

There are admittedly a number of fine moments in Solzhenitsyn. Even *August 1914*, the most cumbersome of his novels, contains a few scenes—bourgeois life at the Tomchaks, Samsonov's suicide—that recall the best of Russian 19th-century realism. But Solzhenitsyn seems to tire quickly of such moments, no doubt feeling driven to go on to "weightier" problems. Like his life, Solzhenitsyn's novels have become increasingly didactic over the years. Again in a manner reminiscent of Tolstoy, he may well decide one day to abandon fiction altogether in favor of polemics; if so, *Gulag Archipelago* will have been the harbinger.

III

While all of Solzhenitsyn's writings are indictments of Soviet society, three of his works deal specifically with the Soviet penal system: *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, an understated account of prison life as viewed through the eyes of a simple prisoner during the course of an "ordinary" day; *The First Circle*, a much more ambitious attempt to show how the prison-camp atmosphere affects all aspects of Soviet society; and, most definitively, *Gulag Archipelago*, a unique, exhaustive, nonfiction work which documents every aspect of the labor-camp network, building one detail upon another to create what must be the lengthiest and most excoriating account of institutionalized terror in world literature.

The "truth" that Solzhenitsyn serves in these works is not metaphysical; it is historical truth, the story of what happened in Russia after 1917. Solzhenitsyn is worried about "the amputation of the national memory"; as he explained in his *Nobel Lecture*, he wants to restore to Russia the missing chapters of her history:

> . . . literature communicates irrefutable and condensed human experience—from generation to generation. In this way it becomes the living memory of nations. In this way it keeps warm and preserves within itself its lost history in a way not subject to distortion and falsification.

Nikita Khrushchev had tentatively begun such a process of restoration, but the devastating effect of his revelations about Stalinism on the entire fabric of Soviet political society caused the process to be abruptly halted, and a full accounting was never made. Now a new generation is coming of age in the Soviet Union; it knows nothing about what happened under Stalin and *does not really care*. Unless the facts are recorded by those who witnessed them, those terrible events will be a totally forgotten chapter in Russian history. This prospect is unthinkable to Solzhenitsyn.

In *Gulag*, however, Solzhenitsyn blames not Stalin but Marxism itself for the system that destroyed millions of his countrymen:

> . . . then Stalin quietly died. But how much has the course of our ship of state changed in fact? . . . he simply followed in the footsteps.

Contrary to what has been asserted of him by some Western observers, Solzhenitsyn rejects the view that Soviet Marxism can be restored to a correct path by eliminating vestiges of Stalinism; for him Marxism itself is the corruption.

Marxism for Solzhenitsyn is the antithesis of everything Russian. "Patriotism *means* the rejection of Marxism," he has said. Western in its origins, concerned with world domination rather than internal Russian development, atheistic and totally antagonistic to spiritual values, Marxism in Solzhenitsyn's view is a dark, un-Russian force imposed by Lenin on a helpless and unprepared society: "The murky whirlwind of progressive ideology swept in on us from the West at the end of the last century and has tormented and ravaged our soul quite enough."

What alternative to Marxism does Solzhenitsyn envisage for Russia? Definitely *not* Western democracy, which he finds "weak and effete" and lacking a "built-in ethical foundation." The freedom from suffering in Western societies—freedom from that unremitting pain which Solzhenitsyn alternately deplores and reveres—has led to "complaisance and concession"; in the West people "have lost the will to live a life of deprivation, sacrifice, and firmness." And Solzhenitsyn has nothing but scorn for the workings of a democratic system in which politicians "nearly kill themselves . . . trying to gratify the masses," in which a judge "panders to the passions of society"

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(by releasing Daniel Ellsberg), and in which "even the will of the majority is not immune to misdirection."

The alternative for Solzhenitsyn is not Western democracy but an idealized Russia, a Russia purified, turned inward, away from the West, to her own "vigorous, inexhaustible, spiritual strength." Solzhenitsyn's ideal Russia would be governed by "those who can direct its activities intelligently." He believes in a benevolent authoritarianism, "an authoritarian order, but one founded not on inexhaustible 'class hatred' but on love of your fellow men." An authentic reactionary, he longs for a return to Russian Orthodoxy and to the values with which "Russia lived for a thousand years."

Indeed, Solzhenitsyn appears to distrust the very freedom for which he has so long fought. He has declared that "freedom is moral . . . only if it keeps within certain bounds, beyond which it degenerates into complacency and licentiousness." He is appalled by the "innumerable drunks and hooligans who pester women in the evenings and when they are not at work." "If no police force can handle them," he has said, "still less are they going to be restrained by an *ideology* that claims to be a substitute for morality."

Solzhenitsyn combines his belief in authoritarianism with an intense nationalism. He considers it "perfectly feasible for a colossus like Russia, with all her spiritual peculiarities and folk traditions, to find its own particular path." He is an isolationist, advocating an all-Russian state with no ties to Eastern Europe or to the many nationalities that presently constitute the USSR. He is uninterested in global solutions to world problems, even those affecting Russia: "After all we have endured, it is enough for the time being for us to worry about how to save *our own* people." Yet in describing the Russian "colossus," Solzhenitsyn uses the vocabulary of great-power politics. He boasts of Russia's industrial prowess, its capability of overtaking the West, and he is disdainful of "backward" countries:

> We, a great industrial superpower, like the meanest of backward countries, invite foreigners to exploit our mineral wealth and, by way of payment, suggest that they carry off our priceless treasure, Siberian natural gas.

His *Open Letter to the Soviet Leaders* offers a chauvinistic dream for the Russia of the future, based on his analysis of the relative weakness and indirection of the Western world:

> Neither after the Crimean War, nor, more recently, after the war with Japan, nor in 1916, 1931, or 1941, would even the most unbridled patriotic soothsayer have dared to set forth so arrogant a prospect: that the time was approaching, indeed was close at hand, when all the great European powers taken together would cease to exist as a serious physical force; that their rulers would resort to all manner of concessions simply to win the favor of the rulers of the future Russia, would even vie with one another to gain that favor, just so long as the Russian press would stop abusing them; and that they would grow so weak, without losing a single war; that countries proclaiming themselves "neutral" would seek every opportunity to gratify us and pander to us; that our eternal dream of controlling *straits,* although never realized, would in the event be made irrelevant by the giant strides that Russia took into the Mediterranean and the oceans; that fear of economic losses and extra-administrative chores would become the arguments against Russian expansion to the West; and that even the mightiest transatlantic power, having emerged all-victorious from two world wars as the leader and provider for all mankind, would suddenly lose to a tiny, distant Asiatic country and show internal dissension and spiritual weakness.

IV

Reactionary, authoritarian, chauvinistic—hardly adjectives that sit comfortably with the typical image of a freedom-fighter and Nobel Prize winner. But Solzhenitsyn is a figure in whom contradictions abound. He believes in the Russian people, but does not trust them to govern themselves; outspoken against tyranny, he advocates authoritarianism; appalled by Russia's suffering, he criticizes the West for not enduring enough; opposed to war, he brags of Russia's potential for world power.

Solzhenitsyn was born in 1918, and all his life has known only the Soviet system. Some of his attitudes—his anti-modernism in literature and art, his disdain for Western "decadence," his commitment to self-sacrifice, his utopian dreams for the future—in a curious way reflect the Soviet dogma on which he was raised. Thus, for Marx's "withering away of the state" he has substituted the concept of an "authoritarianism based on love," a solution which no doubt seems to him more realistic but which in point of fact is equally unworkable; and in place of the dictatorship of the proletariat he has proposed the equally anti-democratic system of rule by a spiritual elite. Solzhenitsyn also seems affected by the attitude of paranoid suspicion toward everything foreign that pervades Soviet society. It is as much through choice as through circumstance that he has been cut off from intellectual currents in the outside world. Thus in some ways, although he has been received with adulation into the arms of the West, he seems today even more alone than ever.

And yet he is hardly without resources: his writing, his mission, and, above all, his own sense of himself. Responding recently to a Republican Senator who had called him a "citizen of the world," Solzhenitsyn said that he did not deserve the designation "since my life experience has not *yet* given me an opportunity to include the tasks and needs of the entire world." It will be interesting to see what he will make of the opportunity, now that it has forced itself upon him.

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Farewell to Oil?

Edward N. Luttwak

With their uncorrupted faith in the sublime dynamics of perfect competition, the editorialists of the *Economist* in London have been proclaiming a coming age of energy abundance in which oil producers will come hat in hand to sell their stuff at declining prices. According to this bastion of classic (i.e., 19th-century) English liberalism, the present expectations of ever-higher oil and energy prices caused by increasing scarcity are based on the "third-rate political economy of linear projections," which take no account of the inevitable reactions to high prices and their long-run effect on the market.

This argument rests on a bit of hardcore economic theory: assume that a group of wicked monopolists were to corner the market for a product—say apples, a favorite in first-year textbooks—thus artificially raising their price to three times the pre-monopoly level. What happens next? The good student knows what he is expected to say: first, economy-minded consumers will start buying pears instead, thus depressing apple demand; second, fruit growers and non-monopoly apple growers will plant many more apple trees, thus increasing industry supplies; and third, many other landowners will switch their lands to apple orchards, thus increasing further the supply by expanding the size of the industry itself.

If oil were a product with the features of the apples and pears of the textbooks, the members of OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) would indeed be reduced to the ephemeral role of short-term speculators on a declining asset. Actually some of the oil, and specifically the 35 per cent or so of total worldwide demand that is used for automotive fuel and feedstock—for which *only* oil will do—is not at all like apples or pears since there is *no* substitute, except for synthetics that cannot (at least not yet) compete with oil even at present prices. But the rest of worldwide oil demand, up to 65 per cent of the total, is used as a source of general energy, and it can be replaced by other fuels. Thus, while the "specific" oil sector is governed by the monopoly OPEC supply and the unpredictable contingency of new oil finds (still more a matter of accidental discovery than scientific exploration), the rest of the oil market is subject to the normal rules of supply: if the prices go up so should the supplies, until prices decline once more.

But "general" energy supply is also subject to other constraints that never seem to find their way into the textbooks: long investment "lags" (up to nine years for a U.S. nuclear power plant), extra-economic restrictions (primarily environmental), industrial bottlenecks, and not least, monopoly restraints—which are by no means confined to OPEC oil. To give one example, the export of Dutch natural gas—an important source of premium energy in Northwest Europe—is controlled by a company with a long and unpronounceable Dutch name, which happens to be owned jointly by Shell and Exxon.

In the dim distant days of 1970 when the official or "posted" price of good quality crude oil from the Persian Gulf was still only $1.80 per barrel, and when the barrel actually sold for about $1.40 at the jetty, Arab and Iranian oil undercut all other energy sources the world over (though there were a few localized exceptions such as the artificially underpriced natural gas of the Southwest of the United States, Norwegian hydroelectric power in place, and Rhodesian coal). It was this unbeatable cheapness, and not the machinations of the oil companies, that brought about the relentless increase in the world's dependence on OPEC oil. The incentive to develop other energy supplies simply was not there. Instead there was a positive incentive to *abandon* existing, higher-cost energy sources, from the once great coal industry of France, Germany, and Belgium, to the windmills of Holland (maintenance was more costly than the diesel fuel needed for water pumps). It is this dependence that OPEC is now happily exploiting—and that the Arab oil producers have already exploited politically—and

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it is this same dependence that the *Economist* believes will be reversed, thus bringing about a collapse of the oil monopoly.

It is certainly true that at a "posted" price of almost $12 per barrel in the Persian Gulf, which currently results in real market prices of $8 or so, the incentive to develop alternative sources of energy must have increased by orders of magnitude. Further, in spite of the thick layers of taxation (outside the U.S.) that separate the cost of crude oil from the price of the refined products bought by the public, there has been a very sharp worldwide rise in product prices, and this ought to bring about some decline in demand. The two key factors that will determine the future of oil are thus the *flexibility* of supply on the one hand, and the *responsiveness* of demand to rising prices on the other: the price elasticities of supply and demand, to use the jargon of the economists.

On the supply side, almost every alternative energy industry with a real growth potential also seems to face intractable bottlenecks. In the case of nuclear power, a whole new industry must be created first in order to fabricate reactor components before much else can be done: until very recently very few reactors were being built and the reactor industry is naturally rather small. Even when the parts become available, nuclear reactors will not be built in large numbers very quickly since the concrete housings alone take several years to build. On top of all this, licensing procedures and the inevitable objections of the Naders of this world, both great and little, are apt to delay matters right from the earth-moving stage. At a rough guess, this means that it will be about fifteen years before the industry will be moving in high gear with lots of plants coming on stream and the reactor industry turning out parts for more at a rapid clip.

The coal industry has many of the same problems and also one of its own. In the mines of Belgium, Germany, and France, as well as in most British and quite a few American mines, cutting coal underground is perhaps the hardest and most dangerous job to be had outside the circus, combat reporting, and serving in Mr. Nixon's White House. It takes a special kind of man to go down into the mines, and it takes a special tradition to create such men, defiant of danger and discomfort —and submissive to poverty. There is not as much poverty around the coal fields nowadays and still less defiance. Experience has shown that once miners find other jobs when mines are shut down —as they have been all over Europe—the manpower is lost and the tradition is dissipated. It is then extraordinarily difficult to persuade normal workingmen, including ex-miners, to go underground again. In the late 1940's the British government introduced a special scheme to bring foreign workers into the mines with all sorts of inducements, but although there was much unemployment in the recruiting grounds of Southern Europe, and real hunger too, only a small fraction of the tens of thousands brought over to work remained on the job. The broader coal seams of the United States, not to speak of strip mining, make the miner's job less impossible over here, but there is still a rather inelastic labor pool, and it will not be easy to convert out-of-work assembly-line workers into coal miners.

Shale rock in the United States, the tar sands of Athabasca in Canada, the lignite of Central Europe, and similar low-grade fossil fuels elsewhere have problems of their own too. In each case, vast quantities of rubble and rock have to be cut up, crushed, and processed in order to get a relatively small amount of fuel. All this crushing and grinding, cooking and refining needs a great deal of expensive machinery—which is in short supply since again the industry to make the industry must be created first. Moreover, it always seems to take rivers of water to get trickles of fuel, and we all know that water supply is already fairly tight where the shale and lignite are. The Canadians naturally have lots of water (it is part of Canada's role as the geographic anti-type of Israel, where every Israeli feature is reversed), but a full-scale exploitation of the tar sands of Alberta would mean that half the province would have to be picked up and trucked away across the border, and the Canadians are on the restrictionist bandwagon just as much as Kuwait is.

As for the other elasticity, the responsiveness of demand to price increases, the instant energy experts created by the crisis hold two opinions. Some say that the world's energy demand is quite inelastic, their evidence being some such piece of high science as the statement that "people will drive no matter what"—I am quoting one of Capitol Hill's $400-a-day consultants. The others, spiritual brothers of the *Economist* crowd, are equally categorical in asserting that energy demand will surely decline. The data are on the side of the *Economist* crowd. Figures are already coming in from all over the world and, subject to seasonal uncertainties, it seems pretty obvious that Italians are no longer quite so keen to race each other on the *autostrada* for the fun of it, and that Indian peasants are running their diesel pumps slower, in the full knowledge that this will result in a hungrier harvest. (OPEC prices will kill many Indians this year.)

But the energy industry worldwide also has a peculiarity that some (not all) of the enthusiastic price riggers in OPEC may have overlooked. Because of the very same rigidities that prevent the rapid and large-scale substitution of other energy sources for OPEC oil, most of the substitution that is and will be taking place is virtually irreversible. If the price of beef goes up, housewives can quickly buy chicken instead; when the price goes down again, they can return to beef

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just as quickly. In the energy industry, however, substitution will most often be a one-way switch. A nuclear power plant that is ordered in 1974 because it is more economical than an oil-fuelled plant when imported oil is selling for $11 dollars on the East Coast, will not come on stream until 1982 at the earliest. Bu once it *does* start working, it will remain in operation until the year 2000 even if the price of oil goes down again to pre-crisis prices, or even less.

Similarly, coal mines which are reopened on the basis of long-term supply contracts will be slow to come into production; it will take years to assemble the manpower and fit out the mines with modern cutting gear (the coal machinery industry is a major bottleneck in itself). But when the mines *do* come into operation, coal users and governments will no longer allow them to be driven out of business by imported oil, however cheap. As for shale oil, with its huge capital investments ($750 million for a modest 125,000 barrel-a-day plant), the ground rules are set by the high capital costs: they will be kept in operation no matter what once they are built.

The long-term implications of this unusual one-way substitution pattern are obvious. By allowing the oil price to go through the roof, OPEC has precipitated a worldwide rush to alternatives from which there is no return. The position of the oil monopolists is a happy one, but it is also fragile. The skillful monopolist in any industry must carefully weigh the extra gain of today's price increases against the future loss of market demand that such increases cause, and which cannot be recaptured. On paper, the $8 per barrel of the present Gulf oil price looks like a reasonable bet for the producers. Unfortunately for OPEC, however, the manner in which the price was raised—abrupt, arbitrary, and seemingly open-ended—and more important, the context of the increase, the Arab embargoes, have defeated the monopoly strategy of optimizing price versus future demand. Governments worldwide are not acting as if the price of oil were $8 per barrel, but rather as if it were $16 or even $24 per barrel. Quite simply, no one wants to accept an indefinite dependence on OPEC oil; the Japanese, for example, have clearly decided to go nuclear as much as possible and as soon as possible, regardless of cost; more than the price, it is the insult that is propelling their program. The British and the French are accelerating the development of nuclear power, and North Sea oil and gas are now being developed at the fastest possible rate. The United States has launched its broad-front self-sufficiency program, and every other industrial country is moving at full speed in the same direction.

What this means is that OPEC is getting the financial rewards of $8 oil, but it is losing its markets as if the oil price were $16 to $24 per barrel. The robber barons of the Rockefeller era would not have made the same mistake. Thus, as the *Economist* predicts, from the 1990's onward OPEC oil may very well be harder and harder to sell to a world energy market dominated by new fuels that OPEC oil will no longer be able to undercut even if the price declines very sharply.

Why, then, did OPEC do what it did? The answer, of course, is that OPEC as a whole did nothing. First the Arab members imposed the output restrictions of the October war for non-economic reasons of their own, and then the non-Arab OPEC members (Iran and Venezuela) exploited the induced shortages to raise prices. In the first instance, this obviously undermined the Arabs' political strategy. Offering or denying oil at $16 per barrel (some spot prices were even higher) does not generate the kind of political leverage that the manipulation of cheap oil supplies could have done. But actually the Iranian-Venezuelan strategy was a good deal more harmful than that of the Arabs. The Iranians and Venezuelans happen to be producing their oil so rapidly that their output will start to decline anyway in two decades or less. They imposed the high oil prices on the Arabs, thus maximizing their near-term revenues at the expense of post-1990 oil revenues when they themselves will be out of the market. This is a very cruel blow indeed to the Arabs who (with the exception of Algeria) are producing their oil at a much slower rate; unlike the Iranians and Venezuelans, they will still have plenty of oil reserves in the post-1990 period when oil will be harder and harder to sell.

Caught between the hammer of Iranian demands for ever-higher oil prices, and the anvil of radical Arab opinion which is always willing to suspect their motives, and which is utterly unfamiliar with twenty-year market projections, Yamani of Saudi Arabia and the other Arab oil ministers of the Gulf were forced to go along with the catastrophic price increases in the full realization that this would enrich the Iranians—and undermine the long-term value of their own only asset. They know that Iran can industrialize while they cannot, since they have small populations and no other resources at all. When Yamani protests that he has been pressing other OPEC countries to *reduce* oil prices, he is telling the truth.

IN SEPTEMBER 1967, just after the Six-Day War, the British government published a White Paper on fuel policy proclaiming the readiness of the United Kingdom to rely on Middle East oil indefinitely. In the paper it was acknowledged that political embargoes were even then in effect against Britain; it was also asserted that such embargoes would inevitably be short-lived and do no real damage; the cheapness of Arab oil justified continued reliance on it.

Today, in the wake of the 1973 war, no government would repeat these confident assertions. It is not merely that the embargoes this time were

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general rather than selective, nor that they were much more prolonged than in 1967. The real change is that the embargoes have now become instruments of a two-way political/economic squeeze. The new mood has been expressed by the *Petroleum Press Service,* a monthly oil journal which is generally pro-Arab and pro-oil company: "The OPEC governments did more . . . last month than tear up contractual agreements, line their own pockets, and indulge in political blackmail. They forced upon the rest of the free world the urgent question whether it is tolerable that [the world's] energy supplies . . . should in future be subject to the will of a small group of exporting countries."

The question that the *Petroleum Press Service* so tentatively put has been answered decisively. It is clear that all governments which have any means whatsoever of reducing their dependence on imported oil, and in particular Arab oil, are now taking action almost regardless of cost. In December 1941 Japan went to war because the United States directly—through withholding gasoline—and indirectly—by deterring Japanese seizure of the oil-rich islands of Dutch Indonesia—was denying indispensable petroleum supplies to Japan. Today Japan is in no position to use military force directly to secure her oil supplies. The Europeans do have the military capability needed for the job, but they lack the political will to act even to protect their own economic survival. Both the Japanese and the Europeans, however, are and will be willing to make the economic sacrifices required to reduce their dependence on Middle East oil. To the extent that they succeed, Arabia can look forward to an economic future as desolate as its economic past. The ghost towns of the upper Amazon and the American West show how transitory an economic prosperity based on a single product can be.

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Building Blocks

A Story

Allen Hoffman

I ARRIVED late for the afternoon prayers on Shivah Asar be-Tammuz. On the Seventeenth Day of the month of Tammuz, a fast day, one laments the breaching of Jerusalem's walls by Roman Legions in the final days of the Second Temple. Shivah Asar be-Tammuz is not your average fast day by any means. It kicks off the whole mourning season which runs for a full three weeks culminating in Tisha b'Av, the day the Temple itself was destroyed. This period is known, in fact, as the "Three Weeks," *"Drei Vochen,"* or *"Shalosh Shavuoth,"* all of which literally mean three weeks. During this period one observes customs and laws of mourning (with the exception of the intervening Sabbaths when all mourning is forbidden). One does not eat meat, drink wine, have one's hair cut, go swimming, listen to music, wear new clothes, or get married. And on the fast of Tisha b'Av one does not wear leather shoes, sit on chairs, or even study holy subjects. In other words, starting with Shivah Asar be-Tammuz you can really mourn your head off. It's not exactly a picnic, definitely not my best season and I come from a family which loves to mourn. And not just at the chapel or grave—ripping clothes, tears, stools, Kaddish, the works. Sorrow, bitterness, anguish, indulgence, sweetness—real mourning. And not just for seven days—for years. And why not? How many sensual things in life are there? But when my family mourns, we are mourning for someone—a father, a sister, an uncle. We shriek Rachel, Morris, Menachem the son of Lazar. It's all very intimate, personal. When Shivah Asar be-Tammuz comes and you mourn your head off, who is it for? The whole world! A pretty tall order. Who even knows the name of the world? Earth? Universe? Did you ever try and mourn for the whole world the week Hank Aaron hit his 700th home run? It is a confusing experience. And if the Temple had not been destroyed, what would Einstein have been, a camel driver in Beersheba? The Budapest String Quartet, olive pickers in the Galilee? It's true. Yes, and if the Temple had not been destroyed, we would not have been around for Hitler and his ovens. That's true, too. All the years of blood. If only the Jews had been good. If only we hadn't hated without cause. If only we hadn't transgressed His Sabbath—our Sabbath. If only we had minded our own business like the Italians and Greeks and all the other short, swarthy races of antiquity. What can you do? Mourn—from Shivah Asar be-Tammuz through Tisha b'Av, and who can be so certain Sandy Koufax is so happy anyway? But the man did pitch four no-hitters, so is it any wonder that I was late for *minchah,* the afternoon prayer?

Of course, I had been present for the morning prayers. At their conclusion the *minyan* attempted to find a time for *minchah.* Eight o'clock? Too soon! You can't eat till nine o'clock!! Eight-fifteen? Too late! At nine o'clock you can eat already! Eight-ten? Eight-ten? Good!

No, they couldn't start *minchah* late enough for me. My goal is always to avoid the business of the day. I was annoyed that we would have to wait so long between the afternoon and evening prayers. Waiting for a fast day to end is the deadliest, dullest waiting of all and not simply because one is hungry. That's the least of it. You want the day to end and to get back to your normal, confused life. Of course I eat when it's over. I overeat, but not because of need, rather it's the principle of the thing. Why not eat when you spent a day not eating! It places the day in perspective; you were famished. What an ordeal that was! No, it is not the eating. It is those final moments when the day is technically over, when the darkness begins to descend, the bright, harsh light relaxes and the true, luminous inner nature of the day emerges. The barest moment before the screen door slams against the frame when the agitated smidgen enters, unintimidated, unhurried, unavoidable and one is faced with the reality no architect ever envisioned: a fly is in the house. And it is His house. You are trapped. So it is between *minchah* and *ma'ariv.* When you are standing in the comfortable little wood- and book-lined room staring at the impending darkness or checking the liturgical calendar to see when it is time to pray or even wondering why your shoes get scuffed the way they do, the day rises up from the worn wood floor, comes over the heavy wooden benches and taps you on the shoulder whisper-

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ing, "The night is for hiding, do you think you can hide from the day? Here I am, all twelve sun-filled hours of me." And what can you do? You turn around to face the day, all of it. So when the *minchah* prayer was finished (it went quickly since I had missed the first part) and Mr. Isaacson sat next to me at the little table in the back, I welcomed him. A few pleasant words with a charming man, a righteous man, and the day would be over. Who wanted to look Shivah Asar be-Tammuz in the eye?

He turned to me and said, "Some things come to mind, you mention Russian."

I had mentioned Russian because Mr. Isaacson is the man who makes the *minyan*. He's not the tenth man, but he is responsible for him and for seven, eight, and nine as well. In the summer it is hard to find a *minyan* and when it becomes apparent that no one is going to walk in the door, Mr. Isaacson takes his *tefillin* off and goes out to help numbers seven, eight, nine, and ten find us. He shanghais the unwary up and down Ninety-first Street. He cadges them on the corner of Broadway. He plunders other *minyans*. This last is like asking Othello to lend you his wife, but Mr. Isaacson is a hard man to say no to because what's in it for Mr. Isaacson? Is he paid for it? No, thank G-d, he has a good business. Does he have to say Kaddish? No, thank G-d, his family is fine. Does he have to run around like a *meshugginer*? No, he could pray anywhere. Who would want to start his day by saying no to Mr. Isaacson? Not numbers seven through ten. And so when I didn't attend regularly, I wanted Mr. Isaacson to know why. Why? My wife was taking a Russian course which started quite early and I had to get the baby dressed and over to her play group. And who gives the baby a lollipop on *Shabbes*? Mr. Isaacson. So I understood his mentioning my mentioning Russian.

He had a distant look in his eye. He was clearly moved by the long summer fast day—waiting for the sun to set.

"I was in the Fourth Russian Army; we hadn't eaten for days. They were shelling us something terrible and then on the fourth day they told us to move forward. So we began climbing this hill. It was a big hill and we were carrying everything. They had even given me a big, heavy ammunition box to carry, too. I struggled up the hill and they told us to dig in so I dug a trench and when I finished a sergeant or an officer would say, 'You with such and such a group?' And I would say, 'No, I'm with the Fourth Russian Army,' and they would say, 'They're over there.' And I would move over there and I would start digging again. I would dig in and they would ask, 'You with such and such a group?' and I would say, 'No, I'm with the Fourth Russian Army,' and they would say, 'Oh, they're over there.' And I would move over there and dig in again and the same thing would happen. 'You with such and such a group?' 'No,' 'Go there.' It wasn't like today; you didn't ask questions. You did what they told you."

He shrugs his shoulders, *nu*, and holds his hands out palms up—what can you do? He lifts his eyes in a perplexed look. What can you do? And what could the sergeant or officer do? This man, Mr. Isaacson of the Fourth Russian Army, is digging. He is honeycombing half of Rumania.

"I went from here to here to here." He points to various positions on our table, the Rumanian hilltop, in front of us.

"Finally I found where I was supposed to be. I was digging in, it must have been near dawn because I looked down and saw water. There was a stream at the bottom of the hill. I went right down there. I didn't walk. I ran right down and threw myself in. My head and arms and everything right into the stream."

He pantomimes his immersion. He smiles: it is refreshing.

"It felt so good. We were so thirsty and tired. The others saw it, too, and they started coming down. Pretty soon the whole army was in the stream. Then they told us to get moving so everybody got up and we started marching along. I felt something under my foot, kind of unsteady, and looked down. We were walking over trenches. We were supposed to replace the garrison. We moved up and took their places and they started bombing us. It was terrible. For three days nobody moved and then in the morning they told us to attack. We went running out a little way and dug in. I started digging. They were shelling us awhile and stopped. I was so tired, I hadn't slept in several days. I guess I fell asleep. Just like that. And the next thing I knew, everybody was running over me. They had given the order to attack and I was asleep."

Mr. Isaacson laughed at this. What kind of soldier is that? The Angel of Death yells "Forward!" and he is asleep.

"So I jumped up, too, and started running. It was terrible. We were attacking north and the Germans were to the east on our flank, so they opened up their machine guns and caught us in a crossfire. We had to turn the entire army to the east."

On our table Mr. Isaacson has the entire Russian Fourth Army wheel ninety degrees to the right to face the darkening windows and the entrenched Germans.

"I saw that they had us in a crossfire and instead of going east, I got down and ran south to the other end of the battle. People were dropping and I was running low. I saw this ditch filled with dead bodies and I thought to myself, *'Moishe, men ken geharget vern,'* so I jumped in and lay down. The whole thing kept going on. After a while a Yettaslav jumped in and said, 'What are you doing?,' and I said, 'I don't know.' "

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Mr. Isaacson shrugged his shoulders for both of us, the Yettaslav and me. What can you do? I asked who the man was.

"The Yettaslav was a big, strong fellow."

Mr. Isaacson straightens up and thrusts out his chest and shoulders. "He was from Yettaslav, a town near Odessa where all the men are big and strong. He said, 'Let's shoot at them,' so I took my rifle and put a bullet in and shot, but the bullet wouldn't come out, so I tried pushing it through, but I could not do it. I put another bullet in and shot and pushed. Again nothing, but that must have done it. It didn't work. I didn't know what to do, so I picked it up and gave it a *klap*."

The bullet-stuffed rifle comes crashing down on our table.

"And it broke in two. It fell apart."

We stare in astonishment and dread at the two pieces of the no-good Czarist rifle before us.

"I didn't know what to do. I looked over to the Yettaslav to see if he knew what happened, but he was right next to me shooting away. I was afraid if he saw, he might kill me. He might think I did it on purpose."

"Did he know you were Jewish?"

"Yes, he knew."

"How could he tell?"

"He was from my unit of the Fourth Russian Army. He knew me. 'Jew, dirty Jew,' he would yell and shoot me. So I leaned over the broken rifle and pretended I was shooting."

Mr. Isaacson leans over the broken rifle, resting his extended rifle-cradling arm on the *chumashim* stacked on the table. The Yettaslav and I are to the left shooting away at the Germans and can't see what is really going on—nothing. Mr. Isaacson continues to hide from us. I can only hear his voice.

"I was like this a long time. The longest time. I didn't know what to do. I was afraid to look over and see what he was doing. The whole battle was going on and I was afraid to look over at the Yettaslav. Finally, I looked over a little."

Mr. Isaacson twists only his head around for the briefest glance before returning to his hiding.

"I couldn't see anything, so I turned around again. And this time I looked."

He looks.

"And you know what? I saw the Yettaslav just sitting there. He wasn't doing nothing. Just sitting there like this."

Mr. Isaacson still using the table as the wall of the trench places one fist on top of the other and on top of the upper fist he places his chin so he sits there bent over and bemused, staring directly ahead like a stone monkey on some Asian temple frieze.

"So I sat up and said, 'Hey, are you all right?' And he didn't say anything so I reached over and touched him a little."

I feel a small tugging on my elbow.

"His head turned a little, and his hat fell off. I saw a red spot on his forehead. He was dead. He had been shot right through the head. I thought, what do you do now, and I took his gun and gave him mine. And then our sergeant came running along and jumped into the ditch. And we lay there for a long time with the whole thing going on. Along about evening it got quieter and he said, 'I wonder what's going on?' I said, 'I don't know.' And he said, 'Take a look.' So I climbed up carefully and looked around. I couldn't see anything and I jumped back down. Then he got up to take a look—nothing. And after a while he said, 'Take a look.' So I got up—nothing. I got down. Then he got up again and nothing. So we were getting up and down and nothing happened but he was a little short fellow and I guess they couldn't see him because he told me to get up again and I got shot, back in my side. It felt like somebody hit me with a strong iron rod. I bent over like this and fell back into the trench. I heard the sergeant say, '*Probalt*, finished.' "

"Nu," someone calls out, "*ma'ariv*." The evening prayer. Shivah Asar be-Tammuz is over. What! Not yet! I'm in the middle of a story. Wait a minute! But someone begins leading the evening prayer. I turn back to Mr. Isaacson, but he grabs a *siddur*, and jumps up with fervor in his eyes. He draws closer to the pipe that runs from down below and up to heaven. I hear him implore.

"He is merciful, He shall forgive iniquity, and He shall not destroy. Often He turns away his anger and shall not stir up all His wrath. Lord, save us. The King shall answer us in the day we call."

The leader calls, "Bless the Lord who is blessed."

We answer, "Blessed be the Lord who is blessed forever and ever."

And I bless the Lord who makes the evening. I glance up. Mr. Isaacson's eyes are closed as he blesses the Lord who turns the day away, Who evens the evening, Who turns His anger away and answers us in the day we call Him. Even then it is dark. Shivah Asar be-Tammuz is over, but the fast is not. Hungry supplicants rush through *ma'ariv*. For me the evening service after a fast is an anticlimax emotionally, but necessary intellectually. This service has always been a test of faith; one I rarely pass. I am purposefully, willfully patient. I thrust the day of affliction into the past in order to turn the day, bend it into experience, but the vanity of affliction rises hungrily from my stomach disintegrating concentration. Have I not done enough? Only Mr. Isaacson entreats, blesses with the fervor of the day. The day of affliction is over, but what about Mr. Isaacson? We have left him *probalt*—finished. I see him lying in a Rumanian ditch on a Russian battle-

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field bent and bleeding as the day turns into evening, a new day. Sorrows are never as discrete as the fasts that follow. How can they be, you can't fast forever. The service halts. No one intones the mourner's Kaddish. Everyone looks around. Are you a mourner? Are you a mourner? No familial mourners. A voice calls to the leader, *"Zugt Kaddish."* A dispassionate Kaddish pours forth. The rhythm tumbles forth—the building-blocks of the universe rumbling against one another as their names are called. The roll call of cornerstones—granite of existence. So fleeting the call, so light the touch in this hurried, famished Kaddish, yet they remain granite and radiate their power when called.

It is over. We are standing. I turn to Mr. Isaacson.

"We can't leave you there, lying there like that," I joke in fear. Fear of what? Fear of death? Fear of the day? Fear of the story? Do not give Satan an opening.

Mr. Isaacson does not hear the joke, does not feel the fear, but his eyes are open and he desires to tell the story. People turn to say goodnight. "On the way home," he explains, "I'll walk with you."

The men who are studying the *daf yomi,* the page of the day, drift toward the room with the long table and the large books. A page a day and in seven years you are finished, done.

A student of the entire Babylonian Talmud. What could be easier? What could be faster? Ah, but there is the Jerusalem Talmud! No matter, never mind. One thing at a time. And when you have completed it, what do you have? You have one. You have earned the privilege to start two. Begin again. What could be simpler?

Mr. Steimatzky approaches and asks me if I have been fasting. "You have? Good. Here!" He thrusts a strange, artificially green bag toward me.

"Take."

I peer inside the long, distended bag to see nectarines gathered in the bottom like refugees. If I hadn't fasted, they wouldn't be mine. Mr. Steimatzky is not in the catering business. I gaze at them, their green splotches all the paler and purer in the chemical green dye of the bag.

"Nu, take." Mr. Steimatzky has a presence, a bearing. He did not flee two countries, two worlds, learn three languages only to hand out pale nectarines in poisonous bags. He is, in fact, a diamond dealer who enfolds his natural gems in conservative custom-made shirts, soft and natural, nothing like this garish sack with its bastardized New World hybrids from Key Foods. I stand there. I am keeping a man waiting with his arm extended as if he were a beggar. A man who shuffled through the express line, eight items or less, with its clanging cash register and garish, chipped fingernails prancing madly about its keys to register the value of his own garish sack—all in a custom-made shirt—just so his fellow congregants who fasted (when you flee two worlds you only bother about the very righteous) can rejoice a little sooner. I stare at the awful color of the bag. Who cares what color the bag is? "Though your sins be as scarlet!" It is a matter of respect. Of generosity. Of brotherhood! His arm is extended. Shall I refuse his kindness and take from him his good deed instead? Shall we both return empty when we both can draw back together filled and fulfilled; he with his *mitzvah* and I with my nectarine?

"No thank you," I say. "I'd better wait until I get home."

He draws back his gift, offended.

"No, I'd better wait for some juice, that's easier," I remark.

What am I saying? I, who used to break the twenty-five hour Yom Kippur fast at Glaser's Drug Store on two vanilla shakes (and in those days they gave you the whole, cold shiny canister with its two-plus glasses lying thick and frigid inside) and an ice-cream cone kicker.

"I bought them for you," he entreats.

"No," I say touching my stomach apprehensively. "I'd better not. Thanks anyway."

"Awright," he turns away hurt.

I FEEL embarrassed, foolish, and I owe him an apology, at least an explanation. But how can I explain that the day isn't over, that it is twilight and Mr. Isaacson is lying broken in a corpse-strewn Rumanian ditch, when outside the very windows of the synagogue Mr. Steimatzky sees darkness and inside he sees Mr. Isaacson saying goodnight to Mr. Sobel? How can I break the fast when the day has not turned? How can I do a good deed with nectarines when the greatest of all *mitzvahs,* the saving of a life, lies before me? And anyway, they aren't washed. G-d knows what is on them.

Mr. Isaacson and I are together again.

"We can't leave you like that."

We are the last in the room. I am standing prepared to stay and listen.

"No," Mr. Isaacson motions toward the door. "Come, I'll walk you home." He takes my arm. We are in the narrow hallway moving toward the door.

"No, please, let me walk you home."

"No, you're hungry. I'll walk you home."

"Please, Mr. Isaacson, it's not right."

"Why?"

Why? Because he lives nearby, down the block in the other direction. Because Broadway is unpleasant and unsafe. Because I should escort you and not you, me. Because. . . .

"Kuvid, respect!" I cry, hoping to understand the meaning of the words, in a high croaky voice sounding and feeling like a bilingual frog, and having no more understanding than the Egyptians of the plague of those croaking reptiles. If

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I can't whisper the word intelligently, why do I think I can understand by yelling it?

"Respect, *kuvid*!" I cry again uselessly and doomed. But, after all, the nectarine man gave me three chances with his green bag, shall I deal more harshly with myself than Steimatzky did? What kind of respect is that? Yes, I feel like a fool screaming at Mr. Isaacson. I had hoped that when I intoned *kuvid*-respect it would be as a shofar blast up above and Gabriel would take not one, but two unwashed nectarines (in the World To Come nothing can hurt you), place them in a green Key Food fruit and vegetable bag, check them to make sure they're good ones (69¢-a-pound, not the ones in the window), staple the bag closed, and write with a heavenly fat grease pencil, "World To Come—Heavenly Reward—Pays Double." Instead, Mr. Isaacson is intimidated by my outburst and says, "All right." Now what's going to happen up there? A voice can come down at any moment and Gabriel hollers, "*Shmuck,* you yell at Isaacson who doesn't need it and you don't take a nectarine from Steimatzky who doesn't need it either. *Shmuck,* you don't know how to give and you don't know how to take." It's true Mr. Steimatzky's custom-made shirts have quite a bit of cloth in them. What can you do? Go home and eat yourself sick?

Mr. Isaacson and I descend the stone steps onto the sidewalk. We turn left toward his building. Respect!

Ninety-first Street glows pink under the high crime street lights. Cars are bumper to bumper alongside the curbs. Heavy brownstone staircases crowd down onto the quiet sidewalk. The buildings, small (a bay window, a fancy balustrade), the garbage cans few, the trees scraggly. And all is soft and close in the pellucid pink of the sodium arc. You could touch it and it wouldn't be rough. It is unreal and very intimate. Mr. Isaacson takes my arm. Behind us we hear a stammering of farewell. We turn to acknowledge Mr. Sobel's third goodnight. "*A gute nacht.*" And Mr. Sobel plunges off down the street in a stuttering motion, for every step taken, three starts.

We return to our direction, but Mr. Isaacson pauses. The mood has been broken. Mr. Sobel has limped into the night trailing shreds of Rumania, fibers of time, moans of agony. We stand exposed on Ninety-first Street. Mr. Isaacson the righteous and I.

"Let me walk you home."

"No, you live right here."

"You must be hungry."

I must be hungry. And not you? Could it be Mr. Isaacson didn't fast? The righteous? But in years he is an old man. I look at my old friend. It has been over fifty years since he turned the Little Father's weaponry into bullet-choked kindling. Why should I be disappointed that he didn't fast? Will it affect the purity of his message? Must righteousness exclude common sense? Over seventy! Until a hundred and twenty! I take his arm to guide him.

"Let me show you a little *kuvid,*" I implore.

It is the night of three's. Three offerings. Three goodbys. Three weeks. Three "*kuvids.*" And in the street, my *kuvid,* my call for respect is heard and does not sound strange. And why should it? What are the upright founts channeled above us bathing the scene in a sea of pink but respect? Pellucid preventive pink: respect for the power of evil. *Kuvid* for the *ganef.* The wall has been breached; the sea enters. Arm in arm we negotiate the floodlit street. We make our way to the refuge of shadow near the corner. One tree on the block is capable of shelter. We are under it. The pinkish rays do not bounce; refuse to diffuse. Incapable of dusk, unable to dawn, how dull is their reflection. Like their inspirers, the evildoers, they leave nothing after them; powerful, but shortsighted, they wither against the simple green leaves of our shelter. And we stand in darkness. Unable to see each other, steadfastly we gaze together upon the sea of carnage. We are returned.

"The bugs. It must have been the bugs around my face that woke me. I was alone, lying there in the dark on my back. I knew I was injured, but I didn't know where. I checked my hands—I brought them together. No, they were all right. I felt my legs; no, it wasn't them. I felt my face; it was all right. Then I felt my stomach. It was okay, but as my arm came down from my stomach, it felt something soft and sticky on the side. I knew where I was hurt. In the side toward the back. I took my hands away. I didn't know what would be. I lay there. After a while I thought to myself, 'There's no *tachlis* in this,' so I tried to get up. It hurt but I managed. I took my coat and cigarettes and a kit like kids have now and started climbing out."

"How did you know where to go?"

"I didn't, but there was a well nearby and I heard a bunch of Rumanian soldiers singing, so I thought I would go there and they could help me. I got my things together and I took a few steps. I was uneasy."

Mr. Isaacson balanced himself delicately using the darkness for support.

"But I saw I could make it, so I kept going. And when I got near, crossing a field—boom! Shells started coming in and I was knocked flat and I went out again."

In the darkness Mr. Isaacson must be shrugging his shoulders, what can you do?

"After a while, I came to again and I didn't hear any more singing. They must have left if they didn't get killed. I knew I wasn't getting anywhere in the middle of the field, so I got up again and tried walking. Same thing, I felt unsteady but I went very slowly. After a while I got to the

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well, but there was no one there. I took a drink. I felt a little better. I was leaning against the well and I thought I could use a smoke, so I reached for a cigarette."

"But you didn't have any."

"No, I had my cigarettes. I left my gun. What did I need that for? I didn't feel like shooting anyone and they were lousy guns. But I took my cigarettes. So I lit it and inhaled. . . ."

I hear Mr. Isaacson inhaling and relishing the sweet smoke after crawling around for half the night like a wounded beast.

"And. . . ."

Although it is very dark, my eyes have been adjusting and I can see Mr. Isaacson. He is standing next to me, his chest uplifted inhaling the cigarette—his act of life, returning to normal. A well in a deserted field, a cigarette in the hot, summer night.

"And. . . ."

MR. ISAACSON'S hands rise to his shoulders and as he exhales they choreograph in quick wavy descent consciousness sinking away, below the surface. Mr. Isaacson's head has bobbed and sunk onto his chest, his lungs empty even of smoke. We leave him there, but my Mr. Isaacson, the one I know, slips out from behind the collapsed one and tells me, "I was weak and I wasn't used to it."

He laughs. Some cigarette ad! He laughs and stops speaking. We stand there silently. The Surgeon General should have spoken to Mr. Isaacson, he could have told him. And yet, I know his daughter. I don't really know his daughter, but I have seen her. A beautiful woman, a model. Mr. Isaacson once told me with pride that she was in one of the most popular cigarette ads. You saw her everywhere. You couldn't avoid her. Was it Marlboro? Kent? What difference does it make? But there she was gaily smiling on this seesaw from the back of slick magazines, down from tall buildings, inside subway cars. Young, beautiful, refreshed, and alive! Amazing! After what a cigarette did to her father! Did she even know? Could this be what Mr. Isaacson is musing about? His daughter on that smoky seesaw and the cigarette that almost killed him? No, ridiculous! Mr. Isaacson can't be thinking of that. The righteous don't tie knots, they untie them.

"I lay there I don't know how long. I was lying there and they came around and found me."

"How did they know you were alive?"

"I guess I was moving a little or something. I had some dreams."

"Do you remember them?"

"Like it was today. Like it was now," he answers fervently.

"What were they?"

"I dreamt I was lying there worried and frightened. I didn't know what to think. It was like the world disappeared. And then my grandfather appeared, a big, handsome man with a beard. A religious man; a saintly man. I remember him very well. A good person. He was standing in front of me."

And he is standing there in front of me, too. Mr. Isaacson is straight and tall with his right arm raised and his curved but open hand rocks forward and back ever so slightly in benediction, strength, and forbearance. And Mr. Isaacson's face has become firm. Capable of joy and comfort, but now it is set firmly. We must wait for another day, it is saying. And to wait for another day we must live through this night. Benediction, strength, and forbearance. Yes we will.

"And he said to me, 'Moishe, it will be all right, don't worry.' And I knew I would be all right. I opened my eyes and I saw a figure where he had been standing. It was very dark, but I could see it had an arm extended and in the hand it held a gun. It said, '*Neyemetz* or *Rooski*?' German or Russian? Since it said *Neyemetz* or *Rooski* I thought I'd better say *Rooski,* so I said, '*Rooski.*'—'*Rooski?*'—'*Da! Rooski.*—' and he put the gun down and they came forward to help me."

"Who were they, soldiers?"

"No, they weren't soldiers. They worked for the army. For two weeks the battle was going on and the bodies were just lying there. When the battle ended, the army hired men to go around and collect the bodies and the equipment that still might be good. They were looking for the dead, but found me instead.

"They came over to me and saw that I was wounded, but by then I couldn't walk, so they took my overcoat. They gave us great, heavy overcoats, very strong, so they took that and I was lying on it like a stretcher. I couldn't keep conscious. I was going in and out and we were moving slowly. It wasn't easy for them."

Under their heavy burden—a wounded man on a Russian greatcoat without handles or rods, the rough wool tearing at tired hands fighting to maintain a grip—we pause. They came seeking death but found life and it's enough to kill them. See what happens when you don't follow orders. Hired to collect the dead, they freelanced a little and slipped a live one in on the Czar. Little Father, we heard you say dead, but look at him with your Holy Russian eyes, he's as good as dead, isn't he? Merciful Patriarch, and if he lives, you won't have other wars to swallow him alive, like a frog, a beetle? And the Czar of all the Russias, irate, all his hemophilia genes dancing a *kazatzke* in Slavic disgust, squeals, "Fools, if you wanted to take something broken, take the Holy Russian rifle Isaacson broke, and if you want to give me a present, why give me a suffering Jew? Of those I have plenty." And the human garbage collectors quake in fear, but a voice comes clapping down like a shofar from the heavens above. "These will eat nectarines in the World

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To Come with the righteous!" Justice! It is Gabriel. He has spoken! The nectarines are redeemed. Mr. Isaacson is saved. The day has turned. It is time to say amen.

"And so you were saved," I return in a response of faith, G-d is a faithful King.

Mr. Isaacson does not answer.

"They took you to the field hospital?"

My wife must be worried by now.

"It must have been something to know it was over."

"I woke up in the forest," Mr. Isaacson is saying. "The light was coming through the trees; it must have been dawn. They had stripped me bare. They even took my boots. I didn't have a thing. No coat, no cigarettes, nothing. They did a good job all right. They took everything."

Everything? I draw further under the tree to avoid falling nectarines. Their crash will bury Ninety-first Street, beating the high crime lights into the ground like mangled hangers writhing in darkness among fluorescent shards on a closet floor. Everything.

"*Ganovim!*" Thieves! I spit accusingly at those two who have stripped Mr. Isaacson. But Mr. Isaacson doesn't share my bitterness.

"Weren't they *ganovim*?" I ask intensely.

"No, I don't know. I guess they thought I was dead, so they left me," he says understandingly.

I feel confused and foolish. If they thought he was dead, they shouldn't have let him go. They were sent to collect the dead. That was their job! With all the Hitlers in the world, I get mad at two foolish, doddering old drunks (they must have been drunks! Weren't they *goyim*?). Two old drunks who tried to save a man's life and when they found that impossible, they rescued his valuables. Dust to dust was not decreed on valuables, just flesh. Yes, just flesh, but I feel something else. I feel anger. Yes, anger. Why shouldn't I feel foolish, I am angry at Mr. Isaacson. I want to ask him, Mr. Isaacson, how can you be so naive? All right, they were exhausted, they could carry you no farther, their hands raw and bloody from the unequal tug-of-war with your coat, all that may be true . . . Mr. Isaacson, hate them! Hate them as I hate them; it will do your heart a world of good. Oh, torn confusion, a world of good? I feel my heart constricting, mean and small within me. Of course, one should have a big heart. A big heart to live. A big heart like Mr. Isaacson's. And maybe, that is why he is here now. The day has turned, but what about the Three Weeks? The day has entrapped me, but what about the night? The Three Weeks have nights, and I feel the dark, invisible cords circling about me. I who would run home to supper am held by the night to a dawn. Mr. Isaacson's dawn. I cannot struggle against the unseen cords of night. I am resigned, but I am not righteous. A part of me wants to race down the street. I raise only my eyes to glance down the still street. I can see Mr. Isaacson on the prowl for our *minyan*. Mr. Isaacson collecting bodies all up and down Ninety-first Street, and I know what they feel when they encounter the holy collector, enmeshed in his net of righteousness. I know their torn hearts. Part screams, "Isaacson, drop dead!" But part fervently petitions, "Oh Lord, make me like Mr. Isaacson." Part pumps like mad for the subway on Broadway, but part beats with fervor, "Where are my brethren? Let us pray together, 'May-His-Great-Name-Be-Praised-For-Ever-And-Ever.' " And so a *minyan* is made as an IRT express slides out of the station with one fewer passenger than it would have carried. But even at that the subway car is jammed; people mashed together like the bullets in the rifle that wouldn't shoot. So where should he be? The refugee? Number ten, the *minyan*. I turn toward Mr. Isaacson but over his shoulder I glimpse my phantom local disappearing down Ninety-first Street. Part of me hungers for that frantic train and not for heaven where the angels remark on weekdays that the righteous can drive you crazy.

Yes, they can drive you crazy. The righteous do whatever they want with you. They control you. Who knows where his story is going? Where his tale is leading us? But his story has become my story, so I take his hand and ask, "What happened?" What happened to you? What happened to us? To all of us? And I am fearful, for I am not sure we will make it.

And we stand together under the nocturnal shade tree to discover our fate. He talks and I listen. He was discovered and carried through the deserter-filled forest on an empty gun carriage to a dressing station in an orchard where his wound was cleaned. I hear of the journey to the field hospital by wagon, too painful—by ambulance ("a real automobile"), too painful—and a roadside conference that elects to carry him all the way by stretcher. And so he arrives at the hospital in the hands of men, but fears to place his fate in their hands again after a young Jewish soldier dies under the knife. An ugly nurse begs him to consent, but he refuses. For days the world has been conspiring to destroy him, but never with his consent!

That night a Russian Orthodox priest appears in the ward and bed by bed draws near with his huge uplifted cross. Mr. Isaacson, exhausted, lifts the fringes on the corners of his garment and the priest halts. The others, he blesses with his cross, but Mr. Isaacson, he kisses.

"I got through the night all right, but the next day was bad. I couldn't keep it from hurting. No matter how I lay, no matter how I turned, it hurt. They wanted to operate, but I wouldn't let them. And how that nurse cared for me and comforted me. What a good person! But she was ugly! Ugly as sin. She cried over me and begged me to let

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them operate. Oh, she was good to me, What a good person. Finally, it hurt so bad, I figured it didn't make much difference, so I told her they could operate.

"The doctors had finished, so she ran to find one. I thought that was the end, but it wasn't. They opened up the wound and found a piece of shrapnel stuck between two ribs. They just took a pliers and pulled it out. It was simpler than anybody had guessed. As soon as they pulled it out, I began feeling better."

"I bet the nurse was happy, too."

"She was thrilled. How she cried over me! What a good person—ugly as sin."

Mr. Isaacson smiles, enjoying the paradox. And what did she think of Mr. Isaacson? Could she see into his heart where he called her a good person? Could she for once see her inner beauty mirrored in his eyes instead of the ugly-as-sin glances that well men unceasingly cast? Or was she herself the righteous and in her eyes Mr. Isaacson learned?

"Without her you might have been lost," I venture in appreciation of her good deed.

"Yes, and not just then," he answers.

"Another time?"

"It must have been the next day or the day after. The Germans started shelling the hospital. The bombs were falling right into the building. I thought I was going to get killed. I begged her to save me. She ran and got an officer's jacket and put it on me. And when they came running in to evacuate the officers, she shouted at them, 'He's an officer!' 'Officer?' they ask. 'Yes,' I answer, 'officer!' They look at my jacket—an officer's—and carry me right out of there as fast as they can. She saved me."

"What was her name?"

"I don't know. We just called her Nurse."

"Did you ever see her again?"

"No, a few days later they moved me farther back and I never saw her again."

"Was she Jewish?" I ask.

"I don't know," he answers. "I don't think so. I think she was Russian."

She is what she is—and that is righteous. And I am curious about the righteous. The righteous are not just nice; they are essential. Thirty-Six Righteous sustain the world. If it weren't for them the world couldn't keep going. It would stop right in the middle of no place—like a yo-yo with no more energy-feeding string to tumble down. *Kaput*—finished! And since they are righteous they are anonymous, otherwise they would never get any sleep. Anonymous, but when I come across one of them, I am curious to find out who they are. What is her name? Who is she? The righteous, it turns out, are who they are. I confess I wouldn't mind her being Jewish, but whoever she is she does her good deeds anonymously, the yo-yo spins, the world turns, and we go from year to year lurching like a blind man at noon. For at noon, the righteous can help the sightless find the path. At night we are lost. The righteous aren't cats; even they can't see in the dark. But she is not entirely anonymous. We know what she looks like. She is ugly as sin. The nectarines are served in the World To Come in an ugly green bag. Ugly as sin and never sings. Ugly? No, unscarred by beauty.

"And so you were saved," I conclude.

"Yes," he answers, "thank G-d."

And for this evening we are finished. How can we go beyond the righteous? We stand a while, quiet and reflective. Mr. Isaacson breaks the silence.

"Regards to the family."

"Thank you, regards to Mrs. Isaacson."

"Good night."

I WATCH Mr. Isaacson cross the street and turn to retrace my steps down Ninety-first Street past the *shtibl* staircase crowding onto the silent sidewalk. It is warm and humid. As I cross Broadway I hear a faint rumbling that might be mistaken for a distant sound from the heavens above, if beneath, the subway, hot and empty, weren't pursuing its predetermined course.

I turn onto my street and see a squat, heavy-limbed figure moving deliberately through the pink light showering down upon him. The page has been learned for the day. Why hurry? A page a day.

I am by his side.

"Are you still fasting?"

"Yes."

"They were for you."

"Yes, thank you. The Three Weeks, a very difficult period," I explain.

"Yeah, but we'll make it."

"Yes," I answer. And I open the door for the nectarine man because we'll make it, and not to—would be . . . ugly as sin.

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The Trouble With France

Walter Laqueur

MORE than a century ago, Alexis de Tocqueville said that "the French constitute the most brilliant and the most dangerous nation in Europe, and the best qualified in turn to become an object of admiration, hatred, pity, or terror, but never of indifference." More recently the French have not been especially brilliant or especially dangerous, and have inspired neither terror nor admiration. Yet it is still impossible to be indifferent to France.

Indeed, since the death of Georges Pompidou in early April, the attention of the world has once again been fixed on France, with the expectation that a new President will effect dramatic changes in French policy, especially toward the United States. But the course of recent French political behavior is unlikely to be reversed by the new President, for that behavior owes more to history than to personality, and is deeply rooted in the traditional feelings of the French both about themselves and about the role of their nation in the world.

Thus, the announcement of the French Foreign Minister, Michel Jobert, not long ago, that France would go its own way in dealing with the Arab oil embargo and that the continued presence of American forces in Europe was in no sense a fundamental concern of the French, was not simply intended to provoke Secretary of State Henry Kissinger into a verbal brawl and a clash of personalities (although it succeeded in doing that), but was perfectly consistent with the longstanding line of policy the French have taken in foreign relations.

Jobert's pronouncements of French independence clearly struck an emotional chord at home, where they were on the whole well received. Others, he implied, may surrender, but the French will resist American domination to the end. France is the only mature nation in Europe, the only one willing to play the European card fully and sincerely; for this it is isolated and vilified. As a recent commentator put it:

> American hegemony is the most formidable system of exploitation known in human history. Alone in Europe, France has for fifteen years contested the Manichean division of the world. All it has earned is hatred: the hatred of its European partners, who are enraged because they cannot play the same game—or do not want to. The hatred, conscious or unconscious, of all those in France who would prefer a life of vassalage and tranquility, relieved of courage and all responsibility.

The author of this analysis, Phillippe de Saint Robert, has progressed in his career from the extreme Right to the editorship of a pro-Soviet weekly; his strictures would be of little interest but for the fact that they express the opinions of not a few Frenchmen. Whence do such strange opinions arise? They are connected in part with the curious but well-established ignorance of many Frenchmen of the world outside France, a world which they have made no effort to understand and basically do not care about. In the last resort only French history and geography, and of course French culture, matter: outside France there is a wall of hatred. A corollary of this proposition, unfortunately, is a tendency to regard France as still in full possession of her erstwhile Napoleonic grandeur, which some Frenchmen tend to invoke at the drop of a hat—as if to be French were an argument in itself.

Living in the past causes a great deal of frustration, nowhere more so than in the area of foreign policy. Tocqueville knew the syndrome well: "What misery to direct the foreign affairs of a people which has the memory of immense force but disposes now of little power, a people with the very greatest aspirations, which basically neither wants, nor perhaps dares, to risk anything." This goes to the root of the problem. At the end of the 17th century Europe was the political center of the world, and every second European was a Frenchman. Today only one out of eight Europeans is French and Europe itself, *pace* Kissinger, is not one of the five pillars of the world.

There have been other powerful and gifted European nations that believed they had a universal mission, and experienced great difficulty adjusting to the modern world. Some, such as the Germans, inflicted much suffering on themselves in the process and even more suffering on others. But they have been cured; only in France can a

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national leader still speak of his country as *la lumière du monde,* as having to fulfill her mission as a world power, and still expect such sentiments to find resonance. "There is no corner of the world," said Charles de Gaulle, "where men do not look to us and ask, What says France?" The fact is that all but the deaf know what France says; it is the most monotonously predictable country in the world.

FRANCE's crisis of adaptation dates back more than a century. As Germany, Britain, and the United States forged ahead in the industrial age, France, that rich and talented country, fell behind. The most bourgeois of nations, France had a number of the bourgeois virtues—thrift and modesty and reasonableness—but lacked vigor, enterprise, daring. The French bourgeoisie wanted profits and security, but security even more than profits. The nation wished to be strong, but did everything possible to hamstring a strong executive, swearing undying attachment to *la patrie,* to glory and the great achievements of the French Revolution, while fighting against the introduction of an income tax. The history of France during the last hundred years has to be written with the focus on the absence of civic-mindedness and on the general negativism of the French middle classes.

Some observers believe that the French bourgeoisie was originally an upright and decent class that only later went into sad decline, becoming avaricious and morally bankrupt around the turn of the century. This interpretation may be too simplistic. Balzac's novels, than which there is no better guide to French social life and politics past and present, already show a middle class undistinguished by any trace of humanism. Yet at the same time, the scions of the "degenerate" French middle class did fight well in World War I, and decades of stagnation did not prevent a spectacular economic upsurge in the 1950's and 60's. In truth, there has always been in the French a curious mixture of reckless bravery and deep anxiety (the latter occasionally sporting a distinctly paranoiac streak), of grandeur and pettiness, of idealism and sacrifice on the one hand, narrow egotism and an utter lack of scruples on the other. These contradictions have somehow been held together by the notion that France's sacred egotism is at the service of humanity. In one of his early books, well before he became famous, de Gaulle wrote of the confluence between the permanent interests of France and the great aspirations of mankind, a synthesis "both beautiful and profitable." De Gaulle himself, on rare occasions, almost brought this synthesis off, but his successors have less to boast of; the recent French deals with Libya and Saudi Arabia may or may not turn out to be profitable, but they have no particular beauty about them.

French politics have not, on the whole, been guided by common sense, although the system *has* produced a number of geniuses. The inter-war period is an example. The idea of magnanimity in victory was quite alien to Clemenceau and Poincaré: Germany, instead, was to be bled white. Against the advice of the British and Americans, the French leaders pursued a policy which contributed not a little to the rise of Hitler. Then, once the Nazis came to power, the pendulum swung to the other extreme: appeasement was more widespread and went deeper in France than in England.

The subsequent years were among the most painful in French history. By now comforting myths have sprung up about the Vichy regime, according to which most Frenchmen never really accepted defeat at the hands of the Germans and secretly supported the resistance movement from the beginning. What actually happened was that the majority of Frenchmen, as at the time of Munich, withdrew from politics altogether. The Establishment, with a few exceptions, supported Pétain and his "national revolution."

After Vichy and the Fourth Republic came that colossal anachronism, Charles de Gaulle, whose actions and ideas dominate the French scene to this very day. De Gaulle showed courage and foresight at two decisive turning points in French history—in June 1940 when all seemed lost, and in 1958 when he got his country out of the Algerian quagmire. But the good he did is outweighed by the disruption he caused in the 1960's—all those grandiose projects and vast designs that were destined from the beginning to fail. As de Gaulle saw it, the world was ruled by one superpower, the United States; the excessive strength of that country (which had won the cold war without apparently realizing it) was the main danger to world stability. Hence a former ally became the main enemy against which French policy was to take up arms, whether through economic strategy (the campaign against the dollar) or by thwarting American political and military designs in Europe ("Atlanticism") and the Third World.

A late convert to the idea of Europe, de Gaulle did not think much of his new allies. The Germans were mere vassals of America; the British were heirs to a great tradition but had turned masochistic; Italy was nonexistent; and as for the Belgians, two provinces did not a nation make. France, then, was to be the arbiter between the Soviet Union and the "Anglo-Saxons," Russia's main interlocutor, and the only power capable of eventually overcoming the division of the world. For a long time de Gaulle boycotted the European Community despite the fact that France was its main economic beneficiary, and he withdrew the French armed forces from NATO; the old power balance, he believed, was to be replaced by a condominium with France and the USSR as its main pillars. To help create this new world order,

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the old gentleman with the towering figure traveled to Turkey and Somalia, to Poland and Peru, to Montreal (*Vive la Québec Libre!*) and Teheran, to Rumania, Cambodia, and a great many other places. The red carpets were rolled out, flags hoisted, sonorous platitudes uttered, factories inspected, cultural agreements signed, decorations bestowed, and toasts exchanged. The carpets having been rolled in and the flags hauled down, it invariably emerged that the momentous visit had not been of the slightest consequence, for the hard fact was that France needed a global policy no more than Scandinavia.

De Gaulle had a view of the world from which he never deviated, even though it was based on a series of mistaken ideas. According to this view, Russia and America had divided the world at Yalta, and since France had not been present to prevent the evil deed, everyone had to suffer the consequences. Yet Roosevelt's and Stalin's signatures did not bring about, they merely confirmed, a change in the world balance of power that had already occurred as the result of World War II. Next, de Gaulle was wrong in his belief in America's omnipotence, just as he greatly underrated the cohesion and the power of the Soviet bloc. His whole policy, moreover, was founded on the support of a strong and united nation, but France was neither strong nor united, and his neglect of France's domestic problems did not make them disappear. Lastly, while paying lip service to a "European Europe," regarding it as an essential counterweight to America and Russia, de Gaulle fought European integration tooth and nail; instead of uniting Europe, he divided it. All the while it never occurred to him that he was entangled in a web of contradictions, that he had no policy but only a number of mutually incompatible visions.

The Soviets had a use for Gaullism: as they well recognized, it was a divisive and destructive force so far as the West was concerned; it weakened NATO and made a common European defense impossible. De Gaulle himself, on the other hand, was confident that sooner or later nationalism would reassert itself in Eastern Europe, and that following the French example, the Warsaw Pact countries would show increasing independence. He flattered the Poles, invoking their great tradition and the bright prospects of French-Polish cooperation. The Poles listened with enthusiasm but knew perfectly well that while France could leave NATO, there was not the ghost of a chance that they could break ranks and desert the Warsaw pact. De Gaulle's *Ostpolitik* proceeded in a world of fantasy. As for détente between the U.S. and the USSR, of this de Gaulle was of course an early advocate. But only in theory, for when America did begin to extricate itself from Southeast Asia and to move toward détente, the reaction in Paris was by no means one of relief. Two "hegemonies" dividing the world then seemed an even greater danger to the general's dreams than one.

WHEN de Gaulle resigned in 1969, both his foreign policy and his domestic policy were in a shambles, and it was generally expected that his successors would follow a more moderate line. The new men were the pragmatic cadres, the technocrats interested in results rather than dazzling but impractical schemes of grandeur, less anti-American in outlook, more aware of France's limited potential in the modern world. The Gaullist faithful distrusted them. In their eyes the Pompidou era seemed the return of the *juste milieu*; some regarded it as the victory of Vichy over the resistance, of traditional bourgeois timidity over the great ideas of French nationalism, a victory of defeatism over a strong and independent French policy. And at first these fears seemed justified. Britain was allowed to join the European Six, friendly gestures were made in the direction of America, and, to the horror of the orthodox Gaullists, Pompidou even put his name on a European document pledging greater economic and political unity by 1980.

But the keepers of the Gaullist conscience had sounded the tocsin too early. Even before the recent war in the Middle East there were signs of new strains between France and its European allies. France's attachment to the European idea largely depended, to put it somewhat inelegantly, upon the size of the subsidy the rest of Europe was willing to pay for French agriculture. Unfortunately, it had already become clear to German, British, and Benelux housewives that these subsidies were what was responsible for the high cost of food, and that the mountains of butter the French were producing were being sold to the Russians at a fraction of the price Europeans had to pay. The resulting popular pressure brought to bear on European governments caused the French no little chagrin.

The real crisis came with the outbreak of war in the Middle East and the oil embargo; this, as it subsequently emerged, marked the parting of the ways between France and its allies. The French argument was, very briefly, that it was stupid and self-defeating to have a single coordinated policy for the industrial countries of the West and Japan; this would cause a head-on collision with the Arab producers. For the Gaullists this was not a question of tactical approach but an article of faith, and epithets like "betrayal" and "treason" were freely bandied about. French patriotism and dignity, it was maintained, made it imperative to go to Riad and Tripoli; to attend the Washington conference, on the other hand, was considered a national disgrace, tantamount to a second Munich. For America had not the slightest intention of helping Europe, and was merely exploiting the oil crisis to reimpose its hegemony, while

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France saw an opportunity to establish a European-North African-Arab bloc under French leadership, which would not only secure Europe's oil supply but eventually emerge as an effective third force in world politics. Why were France's European allies so slow in seizing this opportunity?

AT FIRST sight the French idea certainly seemed attractive, like one of those get-rich-quick notions so appealing to Balzac characters—the ones that cause their subsequent ruin. Not that a head-on collision with Arab oil producers would have solved anything either; one did not have to be a Richelieu or a Mazarin to understand that Western policy vis-à-vis the oil producers, to be effective, had to be flexible, ranging from affirmations of unending friendship to the threat of intervention. The real issue at stake was not confrontation but cooperation *among the consumers,* not only the industrial countries of the West but also the Third World. And in this respect there were bound to be differences between the United States and France for the simple reason that France wanted above all to assure its own oil supply, whereas the United States, being a world power, had to consider not only its own needs but also those of its allies, not to mention such long-term problems as the repercussions of the crisis, economic and political, on the world financial system and on the common search for alternative sources of energy. The French did not in principle rule out discussion of such topics; they just proposed that the discussions be held at the United Nations, and everyone knew what that meant.

As already noted, Jobert's stand in Washington was widely acclaimed back home. The few dissenting voices pointed out that the French would still have to pay for the oil at the end of the day, and that the effect of Jobert's policy was to increase the price, whereas consumer action (the American suggestion) would bring it down. The Arab sheiks, moreover, were not exactly reliable partners; for all one knew they could be overthrown tomorrow, and there was no guarantee that their successors would honor the "special relationship" with France. Anyway, aside from oil they had nothing to offer; they could not help in the defense of France, and were not even able to buy a substantial share of French exports. Above all, what if the French bluff were called by the other Europeans? What if the British and Italians and Germans tried to establish their own "special relationships" with the Arabs?

This last point was well taken, and reflected the lessons of experience. For several years France had maintained a special relationship with the Soviet Union, with unimpressive results. The moment Washington and Bonn established their own direct line to Moscow, the French special relationship withered. And there was the danger that other European countries might begin supplying unlimited quantities of arms and nuclear power stations to the Arab world; some needed little encouragement in that direction. French policy could work successfully only if France were the sole nation to pursue it and if the Americans continued to provide a kind of "protective zone" from which the French could make their forays into the harsh world outside without fear of ultimate defeat or abandonment.

Much has already been made of France's success in concluding bilateral agreements to secure its oil supplies. It is true that contracts have been signed with the Arab oil producers and Iran, but these express intentions rather than realities. France expected to sign an agreement with Saudi Arabia for 800 million tons of oil over a period of twenty years, but all it got was the promise of 30 million tons for three years at a very high price. (France paid $10.80 a barrel; two months later oil was offered at $8.50.) Similarly, France hoped for an agreement with Iraq for deliveries valued at $1 billion; but after Jobert's visit to Baghdad it was announced that no treaty had been signed. In 1974 France will have to spend an additional $6 billion for oil over the previous year, which means that by the end of this year France will be left without foreign currency reserves.

France's "independent oil policy," in other words, is a chimera. And France needs Europe even more than Europe needs France; Europe and America, not Kuwait or Abu Dhabi, are where France's markets are. The only lasting effect of recent French foreign policy has been to exasperate its European neighbors. West Germany is no longer willing to subsidize the French economy, and other Common Market countries show equally little desire to go along while France transgresses the ground rules of European cooperation. In all likelihood France will soon have to start working its way back into the European fold, and it will also have to move toward a rapprochement, however limited, with Washington. Sooner or later the political and military realities always reassert themselves.

IN THE final analysis the real danger is not one of deep and lasting estrangement between France and other Western countries. It is the situation inside France that is cause for worry. The Fifth Republic has been in a state of crisis for some time. If it had not been for three successive years of substantial economic growth, Pompidou's regime would have been in serious trouble long ago. But in any case 1973 was the last year of prosperity; 1974 will be a year of stagnation and of price inflation, coupled with a substantial trade deficit and an unemployment figure not too short of a million. Whoever succeeds Pompidou will inherit a country bitterly divided between the dominant, privileged class and the majority of the underprivileged and exploited. As of this writing, it is not clear who the new President will be, but

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basically the question is not one of personalities, it is whether France's political structures are strong enough to weather the coming storms.

Seen against this background France's defiant foreign policy has something to recommend itself. But according to past experience the domestic impact of a nationalist foreign policy is shortlived. The foreign political triumphs of General de Gaulle did not prevent the crisis of June 1968 which almost brought the regime down. In the last resort it is the standard of living at home that matters, and if the price of eggs rises by 50 per cent again, as it did last year, the average Frenchman will be up in arms no matter what is being said by French spokesmen in Washington, London, and Bonn.

The recent history of France has been a record of failure, with short intervals of apparent glory; France may still be a *grande nation* in the realm of the spirit, but it is no longer one in world economics and politics, and it has no special global mission to fulfil. Unfortunately there has been an inclination in America to take France too seriously; in this respect Mr. Kissinger is only following a time-honored tradition. Yet France's capacity to do either good or mischief to the U.S. is limited. Given France's internal condition, would America be manifestly better off if she were a faithful ally? French politicians have behaved provocatively toward the United States with the result that Western Europe as a whole has come under fire, as if it were somehow genuinely hostile to America. The real problem, of course, is not Europe's hostility but Europe's impotence, its lack of solidarity and the erosion of its political will. Actually there is very little America can do to help Europe in its misery; neither bullying nor appeasing will have much effect. Mr. Kissinger will have to go on invoking interdependence, Atlantic unity, and partnership, to act as if he were dealing with equals, whereas in fact he is dealing with a vacuum.

The countries of Europe will no doubt once again draw closer to America as their internal crisis deepens and outside pressure increases. Western Europe as a major, active factor in global politics, however, is not a reality but a figment of the imagination. For this state of affairs France bears a large share of the responsibility.

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Is There a New Anti-Semitism?

Earl Raab

AMERICAN JEWS have been experiencing "a certain anxiety" since about 1967. General political violence was then at a peak. The 1967 war in the Middle East exposed some unsettling trends on the American Left. So did aspects of the black revolution, as in the 1968 New York teachers' strike. Street anti-Semitism crept out of the closet for the first time since World War II. The image of the Democratic party as a safe harbor faltered at the 1968 national convention, foundered at the 1972 national convention. Official classification of people by race and ethnicity was apparently becoming a way of life. The 1973 war in the Middle East, its outcome, the Arab oil embargo, and the energy crisis raised some additional uncertainties for American Jews.

Reporting on those years, Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein of the Anti-Defamation League have concluded that there is a new anti-Semitism abroad in the land.* They are right: there *is* a "new" anti-Semitism, and they provide hard evidence of its existence, although their portrayal is made the less convincing by a vagueness of definition.

To put the Forster-Epstein thesis briefly: the old anti-Semitism was based on antipathy to Jews, whereas the new anti-Semitism is based on insensitivity. "It includes often a callous indifference to Jewish concerns expressed by respectable institutions and persons here and abroad—people who would be shocked to think themselves or have others think them anti-Semites."

Now if indifference means indifference to Jews in particular *because* they are Jews, then indeed it falls within the practical definition of anti-Semitism. Some of the valuable ADL-sponsored research on anti-Semitism reveals that people who tend to answer "don't know" in response to negative stereotypes about Jews, are also people who tend to give anti-Semitic answers when they "do know." And it doesn't take much research to realize that people who display a *special* indifference to the problems of Jews are really, in fact, something other than indifferent.

But there is another kind of indifference to Jews which is not in itself anti-Semitic, although it may have no less sinister an effect. It was in the course of one important piece of ADL-sponsored research that a national survey included the classic question about whether the American people would support an anti-Semitic candidate. Few said they would, but a third of the respondents said it wouldn't make any difference. Many of these people meant exactly what they said. It wouldn't make any difference. If the candidate promised what they wanted—more food, lower taxes, or whatever—then they would support him whether he also wanted to give the Jews some special advantages or whether he wanted to impose on the Jews some special disadvantages. It wouldn't make any difference.

That kind of indifference cannot itself usefully be contained within a definition of anti-Semitism. It does not represent a commitment *against* Jews, but a failure of commitment *to* the relevant principle of universal civil rights. It is similar to the indifference displayed by those who see someone being attacked on the street, and do nothing. Such people have no feeling against the person being attacked; they simply do not have a sufficient moral or social commitment to helping someone in such a situation.

Forster and Epstein fail to distinguish clearly between these two kinds of indifference in discussing the situation within the United States. They also fail to make an analogous distinction in considering the question of Israel. "The destruction of the Jewish state," they write, "is itself the ultimate anti-Semitism"; and despite the way in which this statement grandly sweeps over some of the normal aspirations of international politics, one is tempted not to challenge it because of the awful import of the word "destruction." However, Forster and Epstein often stretch the word in practice to mean anti-Israel bias in general, and they sometimes even interpret the failure to be pro-Israel as anti-Semitism.

Thus, on the 1973 war, they say that "the palpable erosion in worldwide sympathy and friendship for Jews" since 1967 had helped to relay "the message that yet another attempt to annihilate the Jewish people would be greeted in the mid-70's with massive indifference if not active support." They complain that "we have no reason to believe that the world—beyond the United States government and a few moral voices here and there—is at all prepared to accept fact instead of fantasy or outright lies when it comes to the Middle East." After Yom Kippur, the Arabs and the Soviet Union charged Israel with aggression. England, France, West Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Turkey refused to allow American aid to Israel to go through their ports

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* *The New Anti-Semitism*, McGraw-Hill, 354 pp., $7.95.

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or air. The Vatican "struck a posture of neutrality." In short, "Just thirty years after the Holocaust, a new chapter was being written in the history of European anti-Semitism."

The policies of England, France, *et al.* toward Israel in October 1973 did indeed stem from indifference, but it was indifference of the kind exemplified by the voter who doesn't care whether his candidate is anti-Semitic. These nations clearly did not have a commitment to legal or moral principles which outweighed their own needs—in this case, oil. If the Israelis had had the oil instead of the Arabs, there is no question where those European nations would have stood.

There are, in other words, a number of objective conditions of disadvantage to Jews which are not anti-Semitic in nature, just as there are a number of objective conditions of disadvantage to blacks which are not racist in nature. Attempts to impose rigid quotas on the hiring or training of teachers, social workers, doctors, and lawyers are disadvantageous to Jews as a group on more than one count, but they are not necessarily anti-Semitic in the sense of being designed to hurt the Jews as Jews. Similarly, the creation of Israel set up new conditions of vulnerability for Jews, but these are not necessarily related to anti-Semitism either. If an Amish state had been set up where Israel is, the Arab nations would not have been much more hospitable toward it than they have been toward the Jewish state; Soviet strategy would not be basically different.

NONE of this means that Jewish anxieties over a new anti-Semitism are unjustified, or that Forster and Epstein are overstating the threats which do exist for Jews. They have accurately sensed that there is a danger abroad in America that does not fall within the old definitions of anti-Semitism and they have turned to the idea of indifference in an effort to identify it. Here too their instinct is sound, even if their analysis is imprecise.

What, then, is the new anti-Semitism? To put our finger on its nature, we need only go back to the slogan of that champion of Jewish civil rights after the French Revolution, Clermont-Tonnere: "To the Jews as individuals, everything; to the Jews as a nation, nothing." The fundamental idea was simple: in accordance with the new enlightened principles, the Jews were to be treated as individual citizens on their own merits, on the same basis as everyone else. But the companion thought cast doubt on the legitimacy of Jews not merely as a "nation" but as a group. The great Sanhedrin invoked by Napoleon seemed to go along with a version of the Clermont-Tonnere logic; and some Jews began to talk about themselves as individuals who just happened to have an alternative religious persuasion.

But Judaism stubbornly refused to become just another religion. It was embodied in a "national" group which persistently maintained an alien corporate identity —in institutions, customs, language, transnational connections. There were three major strains of hostility toward this distinct corporate identity, denying its legitimacy. One had its origins (as Philo tells us) in pre-Christian times but flourished in 18th- and 19th-century Europe: nationalist irritation at the presence of a persistently alien body. Another was pre-Enlightenment in origin but still operative: official Christian resentment of the continued existence of a body of Jews as an affront to theology. The third emerged from the modern belief that groups must not intervene between the individual and the state. Rousseau sounded this note when he wrote that "if the general will is to be able to express itself . . . there should be no partial society within the state, and . . . each citizen should think only his own thoughts."

Modern Europe thus never really accepted the legitimacy of the corporate Jew—although it was at its best willing to grant full civil rights to the individual Jew. That, for the Jews, was an impossible paradox, a secular version of Christian demands to convert. In neither case—giving up his religion or giving up his communal identity—could the Jew comply without ceasing to be Jew. And in both cases, the failure to accept the legitimacy of the corporate Jew inevitably resulted in violent assaults on the civil and human rights of individual Jews.

THE American Jewish experience was qualitatively different. At the time of the American Revolution, over half the population south of New England was non-English. By 1850 only 12 per cent of the foreign-born were of English origin. In 1790, the largest religious denomination in the country had only one-fifth of the nation's churches, under the impact of a "swarm of sectaries," as one unhappy Anglican put it. Group differences—religious, ethnic, and regional—became staggering and implacable. Small wonder that under such conditions Jews were not asked to abandon their communal ties in order to become full-fledged citizens.

But it is precisely this willingness to allow the Jews their separate identity as a group which is now coming into question in America. There is, as Forster and Epstein point out, no great wave of "old" anti-Semitism—the kind which rejects, defames, refuses to associate with or hire individual Jews because they are Jews. Rather, one can detect the beginnings of a new hostility to the corporate Jew in America, even among people who would genuinely and angrily reject anti-Jewish stereotypes, and who would zealously defend the civil rights of any individual Jew.

The evidence of this new anti-Semitism is still fairly subtle. It is not an uncommon experience for Jewish public-school educators to meet with rather shocked resistance when they suggest to their colleagues that ethnic-studies programs should include Jewish studies as well as black, Chicano, Asian, and Native American studies. It is not uncommon for community chests and community crusades—which are set up as a convenient way of raising funds jointly for the needs of the various communities involved—to suggest that Jewish agencies should begin to get smaller pieces of the pie.

For increasingly the only ethnic

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groups which are seen as having legitimacy in America are those which are economically deprived. And for all the talk about a "white ethnic" renaissance and a "new pluralism," the expectation is that those groups will disappear as groups when they are no longer deprived. The thrust is toward a similitude of status, some theoretical version of the concept of equality which, when achieved, will turn everyone into "other-white," just as has already been done with the Jews by various affirmative-action agencies of the government. The Clermont-Tonnere formula is being applied anew—and, in America, really for the first time.

But ideological hostility toward the corporate Jew emerges most clearly today in relation to Israel. A leader of the Committee for New Alternatives in the Middle East, David McReynolds, touched the nerve of this animus when he said: "The best aspect of Jewish culture is its tradition of justice and compassion . . . the worst aspect of Jewish culture is the commitment to Zionism—a blind nationalism." He was not just talking about Israel, whose legitimacy as a Jewish state he questions: he was also talking about Jewish life in general. "Justice and compassion" are attributes which Jews presumably share now with many others, including McReynolds. There is no need for them to maintain a stubborn communal existence for *that*.

There is a symmetry between the hostility expressed toward the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state and the hostility expressed toward the legitimacy of the American-Jewish community as a distinct ethnic group—although there are many more internal restraints on the expression of the latter. It is within the context of this hostility that much of the material in Forster and Epstein's document falls more clearly into place. Some of the "indifference" they report toward Israel is founded on such hostility, especially among the Left and the clergy, and some of the "indifference" they report toward Jewish problems in this country is touched with the same hostility.

This is the new anti-Semitism in America. It can and should be distinguished from defamatory anti-Semitism (the "old" variety) on the one side and from genuine indifference on the other. As Forster and Epstein point out, the old anti-Semitism has not returned to America in any significant degree. But the new reluctance to grant legitimacy to Jews as a group is sufficient cause for anxiety, and a sufficient warrant for rethinking strategies of defense.

Quotas and Soviet Jewry

William Korey

Although quotas linked to the proportion of a given ethnic group in the population have governed admission to the universities in the Soviet Union for more than two decades, and although this system has always operated (in the words of one student of Soviet affairs) "to the particularly severe disadvantage of the Jewish population," in the past few years it has begun to take a greater and greater toll. Prior to 1968 the percentage of Jews in the student population had been drastically declining (from 13 in 1935 to 3.2 in 1961), but the absolute number of Jews admitted into universities, mainly those in Siberia, consistently increased; now, for the first time in Soviet history, the absolute number of Jews in higher education has begun to decline. Official data reveal that the number of Jewish students dropped from 111,900 in 1968-69 to 105,800 in 1970-71 (while within the same two-year period the number of students of all other Soviet nationalities increased) and to 88,500 by 1972-73 —an absolute decline over four years of more than 20,000. The percentage of Jewish students among all students in higher education now stands at 1.9. (The percentage of Jews in the general population is .9.)

The explanation for this stunning diminution cannot be found in the emigration figures of Soviet Jews. The total number of emigrants during 1971-72 in the age category 19 to 30 years was about 7,000, of whom the number in the university age bracket of 18-22 would clearly be far lower. The explanation must be sought, rather, in the intensified effects of the quota system.

The impact of the current trend in university admissions policy is already being felt in the area of career opportunities, since in the USSR, as in any advanced industrial society, higher education is the key to personal advancement in economic and social life. Thus, official Soviet statistics on "scientific workers" in part reflect the impact of the university quota system. (The category "scientific workers" includes also persons in social studies, humanities, and law.) During the so-called "Black Years" of 1948-53, when anti-Semitism was a pronounced feature of Soviet life, both an absolute and relative decline of Jews among "scientific workers" took place. Between 1955 and 1971, along with the enormous expansion of the Soviet economy, the number of Jewish university graduates entering the category of "scientific workers" more than doubled, from 24,632 to 66,793. But the percentage of Jews in the category was almost halved, from 11 to 6.65.

To a considerable degree the percentage decline reflected the overall giant increase in highly-trained manpower in the USSR, but the quota system in univer-

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sities also played a role here by limiting the number of Jews who could become "scientific workers." Whereas the average increase for all nationalities in this category during the decade 1950-60 was 117.9 per cent, for Jews it was 33.4 per cent. In 1960-70, the average increase was 162 per cent, for Jews 92 per cent.

Within the next few years, when the impact of the drastic drop in Jewish university students will have made itself felt, a marked decline can be expected in the numbers of Jewish "scientific workers" as well. Indeed, such an absolute decline has already begun in one of the most "popular" of Jewish professions—medicine—at least in the biggest union-republic, the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR). According to a Soviet public-health journal of 1970, the number of Jewish doctors in that union-republic between 1958 and 1965 fell by a thousand.

JEWS do continue to make up a large percentage of "scientific workers," but this is because many are holdovers from earlier periods when access to the category was easier. Indeed, the average age of Jewish "scientific workers" is strikingly higher than normal. In a study of one aspect of this problem in the Ukraine (where 36.1 per cent of Soviet Jews live), Professor Mordechai Altshuler of the Hebrew University found that the age of Jews holding doctorates in the social sciences and humanities was markedly higher than the general average, ranging from 12.7 years higher in economics to 4.5 in linguistics. In the biological sciences, Jews were older than their colleagues in the same disciplines by between 2.2 to 6.2 years. Only in physics and mathematics did the differential shrink—from .3 to 1.3 years.

Estimates based on the entire faculties (those holding doctorates and those designated as teachers) of Ukrainian universities point in the same direction. Altshuler found that while 30.8 per cent of the total faculties were over 65 years of age, Jews in that age group constituted 37.4 per cent. The situation was sharply reversed in the 35-44-year-old category; that age group constituted 9.18 per cent of the total faculties, while Jews in the same age group accounted for only 4.2 per cent.

LIMITATIONS upon access to careers as "scientific workers" because of university admissions policy is only one aspect of the problem facing today's Soviet-Jewish intellectual. Increasingly, he finds himself shut out of various specialized fields of science as well, and his opportunities for advancement or promotion to elite and administrative positions are being constricted. From the mid-60's on, and especially since 1968, anti-Jewish restrictions have been introduced into the appointment policies of most institutions of higher learning and specialized research institutes. These restrictions have not ordinarily struck at older Jews already occupying senior or administrative positions. It is the middle and younger generations of scientists and academics that have been affected most. They have been shunted to research institutes attached to various government ministries to work on secondary problems. The policy is reflected statistically in the sharply different percentages of Jews among the teaching staff of higher educational institutions (5.5 per cent) and among research institute workers (9.1 per cent).

Andrei Sakharov, in his famous memorandum on *Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom* published in June 1968, chastised the President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Mstislav Keldysh, for a speech at a Moscow party conference apparently justifying the new policy: "Is it not disgraceful to allow another backsliding into anti-Semitism in our appointments policy. . . ?" The historian Roy Medvedev briefly elaborated upon a method used to implement the policy: "And if, in some institute, there is one Jew among nine or ten department chairmen or professors, then a second will not be appointed; and if one is appointed, then this must be compensated for at the expense of some other institute."

That even the prestigious Academy of Sciences itself is not immune from anti-Jewish discrimination is evidenced in a revealing letter written to the President on October 10, 1970 by Professor I. S. Narsky of Moscow State University. The text later circulated in *samizdat*:

> Recently, I have frequently come across allegations about me which are being spread among members of the Department of Philosophy and Law of the USSR Academy of Sciences saying that I am concealing my true nationality, as supposedly I am really a "Polish Jew." I could have ignored these rumors if it were not for the circumstances that they are transparently connected with the fact of my promotion to candidate status for election as a corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Sciences.

Narsky took elaborate pains, drawing upon a fairly extensive genealogy, to demonstrate that his parentage was exclusively Great Russian in origin.

If the number of Jews in administrative positions and in higher institutions has been sharply restricted, one area seems to have been made altogether *Judenrein*. A government circular, distributed privately in 1970 to sensitive agencies, specified the undesirability of employing Jews at "responsible levels" in institutions connected with defense, rocketry, atomic weaponry, and "other secret work." (The euphemism used for Jews was "persons belonging to a nationality the state organization of which pursues an unfriendly policy in relation to the USSR.") The essentials of the circular were disclosed in May 1970 by Roy Medvedev and Professor Mikhail Zand in separate *samizdat* essays.

The increasingly discriminatory barriers and the intensifying decline of career opportunities have generated, according to the eminent mathematical physicist, Alexandr Voronel (in a *samizdat* essay of 1972), a "crisis" among Soviet-Jewish intellectuals:

> Whereas past restrictions hampered Jews, today's threaten the very foundations of their existence as a group. . . . When intellectuals who have built their lives on professional achievement perceive barriers to their ad-

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vancement, they find themselves in a crisis that is tantamount to loss of the meaning of life.

DESPITE the longstanding quota system, of course, the fact is that Soviet Jews as a group have managed to achieve a very high educational level. According to recent data drawn from the 1970 census, in the largest Soviet union-republic, the RSFSR (where the largest number of Soviet Jews live), Jews by far outnumber, relatively, any other nationality, including Russians, in attaining and completing a higher education. More than one-third of Jews 10 years of age and older have a higher education while the corresponding figure for Russians in that union-republic is only one in 25; and the spread is much greater with regard to other nationalities inhabiting the RSFSR.

Specific data on higher education are also available for four other union-republics—the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Moldavia, and Latvia. Significantly, in none of them have Jews attained the educational level they reach in the RSFSR. In the Ukraine, 283 out of 1,000 Jews (over the age of 10) completed a higher education; in Byelorussia, 248 out of 1,000; and in Latvia, 285 out of 1,000. Yet even these proportions outdistance both the predominant local nationality and the Russians who live there.

Roy Medvedev, in his illuminating *samizdat* document on the Jewish question, explains by indirection how Soviet Jews have succeeded in overcoming obstacles. The quota system, he notes, "varies from city to city and university to university." In Leningrad, for example, it is less severe than in Moscow. Easiest of all is admission to various universities of Siberia. Thus, if a Jew cannot scale the especially high barriers of the University of Moscow, he may look for success elsewhere. This would account for an odd phenomenon: the relatively high proportion of Jewish students in union-republics where the size of the Jewish population is negligible.

The occupational skills possessed by Jews are what has maintained the Kremlin's "very definite interest in holding the Jews as captive labor," to quote one student of Soviet minority problems. Especially is this true in Moscow. That city, as of January 1971, contained 25.2 per cent of the total number of "scientific workers" of the Soviet Union, of whom 10.7 per cent (25,023) were Jewish. It has been estimated that one-quarter of all Moscow's Jewish inhabitants are supported by individuals gainfully employed in scientific work (as compared with 8-9 per cent of the total Soviet Jewish population). Indeed, nearly 39 per cent of all Jewish "scientific workers" are concentrated in Moscow; and other cities in the RSFSR, notably Leningrad and Novosibirsk, hold another 25 per cent.

Obviously such a concentration of talent cannot be easily replaced, and it is in this light that we must understand the determined effort on the part of Soviet authorities to stifle the Jewish exodus to Israel. We have here a two-pronged policy. On the one hand, the Kremlin increasingly circumscribes the opportunities of the Soviet-Jewish intelligentsia; on the other, it imposes sharp restrictions on the possibilities of leaving the USSR. Educated Jews who seek exit visas are subjected to intimidation, harassment, and outright refusal, while at the same time they are deprived of jobs, of the use of laboratories, and of opportunities to publish.

These devices are designed less to prevent one or another specialist from leaving (since without work he is useless anyway), than to deter others from making application for exit visas. The scientist Benjamin Levich, joined by Voronel, has made this point clearly:

> . . . the authorities have in mind not us but those of our colleagues whom they intend to frighten with the sight of our being made outcasts. . . . The scientists must see in our example what awaits them in case of disobedience—the loss of work, the end of a scientific career, personal insecurity, and a quite doubtful possibility of emigration.

Available data on recent Soviet-Jewish emigration to Israel illuminate the severe restrictions on the intelligentsia. In 1971, only 6.7 per cent of the total number of emigrants came from the RSFSR, where the bulk of the Soviet-Jewish intelligentsia resides; in 1972, the percentage from the RSFSR declined to 5. Statistics on educational levels of emigrants from all areas of the USSR show that only 17 per cent in 1972 (mainly from the non-RSFSR areas) had completed a higher education.

Over a decade ago, a United Nations study by Judge José Ingles on the "right to leave" spoke of the "spiralling effect," leading to "a sort of collective claustrophobia," that is caused by the pursuit of policies such as those implemented by the Soviet Union. A group subjected to such treatment inevitably develops what Ingles called a "morbid fear of being hemmed in," which leads in turn to the kind of desperate measures —whether in the form of a determination to emigrate, or in the form of appeals to the international community for assistance—now being resorted to by many Soviet-Jewish intellectuals.

Beyond the consideration of psychological stress, however, is the objective reality of the reappearance of a new kind of "serfdom" in the modern world, the denial of the right to dispose of one's skills freely. Levich and Voronel point out an integral feature of the free scientist:

> The sole rightful owners of their hands or their brains are the people themselves. No references to government interests can forbid scientists from feeling that they are free people and, in particular, prevent them from going, together with their brains, to their historical homeland if such is their desire.

The authors define Soviet-Jewish intellectuals as persons who are being transformed into "the serfs of the 20th century." This alone should serve to make their plight an important item on the agenda of the free world's moral conscience.

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Our Best-Known Neglected Novelist

John Romano

JOHN Hawkes is perhaps this nation's best-known neglected novelist. When *The Blood Oranges*, his fifth novel, appeared in 1971, a front-page review in the Sunday book section of the New York *Times* complained of his persisting obscurity. "Feasibly our best writer," wrote novelist Thomas McGuane. "Inevitably you finish a Hawkes novel wondering why he is not better known." But something has been done in the last decade, especially by reviewers and critics and the academic community, to rectify the long neglect of Hawkes. There are several books devoted wholly or in part to the study of his work, his last three novels have met with large-scale critical success, and articles are quietly accumulating on such topics as "The Romance Structure of *Second Skin*" and "Narrative Unreliability as a Structural Element in Hawkes's Fiction." Although he is still not much read by the general public, the steady, perennial voice of his supporters, and still more, of course, the novels themselves, have won from many a conviction of the centrality and importance of his work at the present time. It is clear, too, that Hawkes has merited his reputation for aesthetic purity: he is a singularly committed and devout practitioner of the fine art of the novel at a time when that austere discipline totters with disregard. There can be no quarrel with his seriousness and integrity.

Still, as is perhaps inevitably the case when a due measure of respect has been long withheld, compensating claims for Hawkes's stature tend to be exaggerated, implausible. If the general public has remained unimpressed, the reason may be that they are genuinely baffled and discouraged by the difficulties of Hawkes's presentation, or that they are offended, justifiably or not, by the harshness, the dread, the bitter violence of such earlier works as *The Cannibal* (1949), *The Beetle Leg* (1951), and *The Lime Twig* (1961). His latest novel, *Death, Sleep, and the Traveler*,* and its immediate predecessor, *The Blood Oranges*, both seem to be mellow, erotic fictions, but in fact neither the horror of his earlier visions, nor their difficulty of access, has truly abated, though they have been transmuted and refined.

Hawkes's first novel, *The Cannibal*, something of an underground classic, is an explicitly absurd and horrendous story of postwar Germany, "occupied" by a solitary American on a motorcycle. It is told from the point of view of Zizendorf, a neo-Nazi agitator, who overthrows the American and restores fascist Germany in the novel's climax. As the final insurgency nears, Zizendorf's landlady performs a ritual slaughter in a passage which demonstrates both the restraint and the power of the young writer:

> Before dawn on the morning of the riot, Madame Snow stood alone by candlelight in a back room where cordwood had been piled, holding a stolen chicken struggling lightly beneath her fingers. . . . The feathers, bitten with mange, trembled and breathed fearfully. The soft broken claws kicked at her wrist. For a moment the Kaiser's face, thin, depressed, stared in at the cell window, and then was gone, feeling his way over a land that was now strange to his touch. The old woman watched the fowl twisting its head, blinking the pink-lidded eyes, and carefully she straddled the convulsing neck with two fingers, tightened them across the mud-caked chest, and with the other hand seized the head that felt as if it were all bone and moving bits of scale. The pale yellow feet paddled silently backwards and forwards, slits breathed against her palm. Madame Snow clenched her fists and quickly flung them apart so that the fowl's head spurted across the room, hit the wall and fell into a heap of shavings, its beak clicking open and shut, eyes staring upwards at the growing light.

The detailed and tactilely precise description of the improbable act is, along with the anachronistic Kaiser, a convention of surrealist art, but here it is a convention artfully obeyed. Its use is well-judged and the effect is disturbing.

Allert Vanderveenan, the narrator of Hawkes's newest novel, puts before us events equally improbable, equally unsettling—for example, the squashing of transparents grapes in which are embedded tiny human fetuses—but such events occur only in his dreams as he reports them to the reader and to his wife, who is in the habit of interpreting, and misinterpreting, his dreams with a brutal and vengeful Freudianism. The "real" level of events in *Death, Sleep, and the Traveler* is not violated by the absurd and impossible as in *The Cannibal*, nor is the time sequence scrambled except in such a way as may be unscrambled with relative ease. Yet both novels assault us, terrorize us, with images drawn, it seems, from our own deepest recesses of subliminal isolation and pain. At his most effective, Hawkes toys ably with our capacities for dread.

It is not Hawkes's ability to shock us but his purpose in doing so that invites question. "I believe," he has said,

> in all the recurrent ancestral fears and abortive births we find in dreams as well as literature. The constructed vision, the excitement of the undersea life of the inner man, a language appropriate to the delicate knowledge of us all as poor, forked, corruptible, the feeling of pleasure and pain that comes when something pure and contemptible lodges in the imagination—I believe in the "singular and terrible attraction" of all this. For

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JOHN ROMANO, *who has published poetry in* American Review *and is currently completing a doctorate at Yale, contributed "Sylvia Plath Reconsidered" to the April* COMMENTARY.

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me the writer should always serve as his own angleworm—and the sharper the barb with which he fishes himself out of the blackness, the better.

NOT ALL of Hawkes's fishing expeditions for primal horrors are successful ones. He errs, chronically, on the side of the obvious. For example, the climactic sign of an outdated and destructive sexual repression in *The Blood Oranges* turns out to be a chastity belt with metal teeth dredged up from an ancient fortress. His symbolism is often "ancestral" only in the sense of timeworn: the emblem of sexual prowess in *The Lime Twig* is a racehorse. In *Second Skin*, we know that the central character, Skipper, has triumphed over the forces of death and sterility because he is employed, in the end, as an artificial inseminator of livestock on a tropical island. In light of the frequency and prominence of such examples, we may presume that Hawkes has sought obviousness rather than failed to avoid it. He is after the familiarity of archetype: his visions are "constructed" to house elementary human myths. But the problem with so abstractly programmatic a base for fiction is that the fiction can, in one sense, never be better than the idea upon which it depends. In Hawkes's case, the implied notion of psychology is reductive and simplistic, with predictable one-to-one correspondences according to which horses are phallic and moaning cattle suggest fertility.

A further difficulty with the psychological basis of Hawkes's fiction is that it is inconsistent with Hawkes's revolt against the conventions of realistic characterization. Hawkes has spoken of the novelist's need to parody the novel form, and along with John Barth and Thomas Pynchon, among others, he has sabotaged the illusion of character "depth" in fiction, the illusion of a whole and centered self, consistent through space and time. Michael Hencher, narrator of the opening pages of *The Lime Twig*, is a successful parody of such characterization. His past is presented with a thoroughness reminiscent of the realistic tradition, and we are led artfully to an understanding of his physical and emotional present. But shortly after the central action of the novel is under way, Hencher is wantonly eliminated, and the story is acted out by characters whose interiors we hardly know at all. It is a valid ruse. But Hawkes's other strategy, in which "nightmarish aspects of the unconscious" are fished up to horrify the placid ego, depends by its very nature on the older, more centered notion of the human personality. Real psychic terror presupposes a real psyche. Like many experimental writers, Hawkes is trying to have it both ways. He seeks to outrage or amuse us by exploding the conventions of realism, but is unwilling to forgo the intense visceral appeal that the illusion of real life and real people affords. As a result, the cake is neither had nor eaten. An example of such a failure, also taken from *The Lime Twig*, is the scene in which Michael Bates, who has dreamed erotic dreams of horses all his life, assists in the stealing of a real horse. The scene has considerable imagistic and visual power. But because we have been denied a real, inner sense of Michael's dreaming, the capture of the horse remains unconvincing on the psychological level, loosely and lamely allegorical, rather than an authentic fleshing out of the shadowy types of Michael's longing. The result, here and elsewhere, of a confusion of aims, is incoherence, indecisiveness of effect.

MOST talk about John Hawkes is talk about the originality and mastery of his style. It is to this he owes his reputation as a "writer's writer." Saul Bellow, Robert Penn Warren, Thomas McGuane, John Updike, and John Barth, as well as such writer-critics as Albert Guerard, Leslie Fiedler, Anthony Burgess, and Susan Sontag have all paid tribute to his talent. With some exceptions, what they have recorded is their admiration for the polish, the density, the virtuosity of cadence and alliteration in such passages as the following from *Second Skin*, in which Skipper is tattooed with the name of his scoundrel son-in-law, while his daughter Cassandra looks on:

> The scream—yes, I confess it, scream—that was clamped between my teeth was a strenuous black bat struggling, wrestling in my bloated mouth and with every puncture of the needle—fast as the stinging of artificial bees, this exquisite torture—I with my eyes squeezed tight, my lips squeezed tight, felt that at any moment it must thrust the slimy black tip of its archaic skeletal wing out into view of Cassandra and the working tattooer. But I was holding on. I longed to disgorge the bat, to sob, to be flung into the relief of freezing water like an old woman submerged and screaming in the wild balm of some dark baptismal rite in a roaring river. But I was holding on. While the punctures were marching across, burning their open pinprick way across my chest, I was bulging in every muscle, slick, strained, and the bat was peering into my mouth of pain, kicking, slick with my saliva, and in the stuffed interior of my brain I was resisting, jerking in outraged helplessness, blind and baffled. . . . There were tiny fat glistening tears in the corners of my eyes. But they never fell. Never from the eyes of this heavy bald-headed once-handsome man. Victim. Courageous victim.

This is an impressive verbal performance, quite apart from its qualities of imagination and the convincing realism of the agony. There is no slack in such writing. The variety of linguistic effect—crispness, sinuosity, liquidity—is matched by what amounts to a whole art of punctuation, of pause and timing. This is the creative writing that teachers of creative writing never wholly succeed in teaching, and it is no wonder that Hawkes is a more frequent example in the classrooms of that perplexing study than Updike or Mailer or Malamud. It is probably not irrelevant that Hawkes is himself a graduate of creative writing courses, has taught in them for some time, and is a public spokesman for their merits. There is behind almost every phrase of his long *oeuvre* a constant pressure of craft. His expertness appears with special clarity, of course, to those whose profession entails the husbandry of words in English.

But there is also an implied denigration in the label, "writer's

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writer," which Hawkes may deserve as well as the explicit praise: *Second Skin* is a very good novel, but as a novel it is not so good as the above quotation is, as a piece of writing. In the case of so fumbling and inchoate a novel as *The Beetle Leg,* or one so vapid as *The Blood Oranges,* the disparity between the quality of the vision and the quality of its expression is, of course, the more striking. But everywhere Hawkes's writing is superior to any of his novels as works of art.

McGuane's review of Hawkes provided him with the opportunity for a few remarks on a related subject. Hawkes, he said,

> seems to have fallen outside the indemnification plans offered by the New York and San Francisco literary protection leagues. The kind of friendly style with tastefully timed displays of muscle that is the earmark of the "serious" at this point in novels does not seem to have moved Hawkes. The possible audience for his fiction is one devoted to letters, and not one bent on glazing over his magnificent language looking for information on the Mafia, horse racing, or the sexual nuances of randy secretaries.

I confess to knowing exactly what McGuane means about the distastefulness of the "friendly style," though I am sure he would agree with me that Hawkes is not necessarily a good novelist because Gore Vidal is (often) a bad one. The reference to horse racing, however, reminds me that Vronsky's horse racing in *Anna Karenina* succeeds in giving a realistic account of the sport without peril to the magnificence of the passage as writing. McGuane is surely right if he is objecting to what Hawkes has called "soft, loose prose." Dostoevsky, Dreiser, and other masters who have written such prose have overcome its inexactitude only through genius. But there are hints in his appeal to an "audience . . . devoted to letters" and in his slur on "information" that McGuane's aversion is to the whole enterprise of realism. This is by no means a new aversion, but it is one that requires more rigorous argument than his attack on sloppy workmanship. Hawkes himself has complained with regrettable fuzziness about "fiction which tries to cope too directly with life itself or is based indulgently on human experience." On one level this is an appropriate plea for artful indirection in fiction. On another, it comes near to joining McGuane in the assumption that a devotion to "letters" is necessarily at odds with a direct and realistic or "informational" interest in "life" and "human experience." Their remarks can usefully be contrasted to the following piece of literary history by Tom Wolfe (*Esquire,* August 1972):

> In 1948 Lionel Trilling presented the theory that the novel of social realism . . . was finished because the freight train of history had passed it by. The argument was that such novels were a product of the rise of the bourgeoisie in the 19th century at the height of capitalism. But now bourgeois society was breaking up, fragmenting. A novelist could no longer portray a part of that society and hope to capture the *Zeitgeist*; all he would be left with was one of the broken pieces. The only hope was a new kind of novel. . . . This theory caught on among young novelists with an astonishing grip. . . . The next thing one knew, they were into novels of ideas, Freudian novels, surrealistic novels ("Black Comedy"), Kafkaesque novels and, more recently, the catatonic novel or novel of immobility, the sort that begins: "In order to get started, he went to live alone on an island and shot himself." (Opening line of a Robert Coover short story.)

As a historian, Wolfe is mistaken: the conviction that experience is too fragmented to be convincingly surveyed in the novel of social realism, that history and time itself have a more complex movement than can be recorded by the narrative convention of linear time, that finally the self is more illusory and ambivalent a whole than can be represented in the traditional versions of point-of-view—these realizations have roots in the earliest history of the novel form.

But the point of Wolfe's satire on recent fiction is well taken. McGuane's perhaps inadvertent suggestion of a radical opposition between life and letters is increasingly the view of the literary establishment he assails, and literary talent is presently discouraged from the use of traditional literary forms, such as the realistic novel, to study and record human experience. I do not entirely share Tom Wolfe's enthusiasm for *Armies of the Night* or *In Cold Blood,* and his argument that the "New Journalism" has filled the role of social criticism left vacant by the novel is questionable on other grounds. But he is right to upbraid the irresponsibility, the self-indulgence, the autism of much current experimentalism. The shattering of that stable view of the universe which supported realist fiction must be taken first of all as a disaster for human consciousness. Properly, it is an occasion for anguish, as it is in Joyce and Faulkner. In the work of Donald Barthelme and Robert Coover, and recently in the work of John Barth, there is a sense of having grown used to the fracture and dishevelment of our existence, or even of relishing, of celebrating, the chaos that has ensued. But in virtually all of Hawkes's fiction, the pain of our dislocation can still be felt. For that reason, Hawkes must be judged a more old-fashioned writer than many of the novelists he superficially resembles—and partly also on that account a better one. Significantly, his best novel, *Second Skin,* is also his most realistic. Unfortunately, his more recent fiction has tended toward the obliquity and self-conscious artificiality that are now so fashionable. As a result, *Death, Sleep, and the Traveler,* though more clever in design and execution than *Second Skin,* lacks almost entirely the earlier novel's conviction and power.

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Cagney & Other Movie Stars

William S. Pechter

"He moved more gracefully than any other actor in Hollywood," Kenneth Tynan said of him, and excluding only Chaplin, Keaton, and Astaire, he couldn't have been speaking about anyone but James Cagney. Though the actual televised award ceremony was mainly the embarrassment such things seem inevitably to be, the American Film Institute's recent bestowal of its second "Life Achievement Award" on Cagney was a gesture I approved as wholeheartedly as I did the giving of the first award to John Ford. Like Ford, however, Cagney really can't be grasped through film clips, and perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of the TV presentation was the impression it might leave in the minds of those unfamiliar with Cagney's best work that the occasion was just another wallow in nostalgia, a sentimental tribute to the movies' original "tough guy," or one of those media events whose ostensible subject has somehow been mislaid, much as the actual film of *The Great Gatsby* now seems to be no more than the tail end of the fashion industry's "Gatsby look." Yet there's no discernible Cagney boom so far, at least not on the order of the recent Astaire revival, nor has there ever been a Cagney cult comparable to Bogart's. Some of the reasons for this seem fairly obvious, others rather less so.

Most obvious, perhaps, is the fact of Cagney having appeared in so few films which have themselves won the public's lasting enthusiasm and affection as have Bogart's *The Maltese Falcon, The Big Sleep, Casablanca,* etc. Among Cagney's films, though *The Public Enemy,* which rocketed him to stardom, retains much of its topical punch and vigor, it has generally aged less well than has *Scarface* (if better than *Little Caesar*); and of the other Cagney movies, many of them comedies, made in the early 30's (including such quite brilliant films as *Blonde Crazy, Taxi, Hard to Handle, Lady Killer,* and *Jimmy the Gent*), only *Footlight Parade,* thanks mainly to the camp appeal of Busby Berkeley's production numbers, is much seen today. *G Men,* a big Cagney hit of the mid-30's, probably seems too naively reverential of the FBI for today's tastes, while, of the films from the later 30's, *Angels with Dirty Faces* and *The Roaring Twenties,* the former a crisp genre piece and the latter a soggy one, get television play, largely owing, one suspects, to the presence in them of Bogart (playing characters gunned down by Cagney in both movies). *Yankee Doodle Dandy,* which, in 1942, provided Cagney with his biggest box-office success, his one Oscar, and his own favorite among his screen roles, also survives today chiefly on television: though enjoyable, its flag-waving schmaltz lacks *Footlight Parade*'s campiness, and its main appeal now is rather squarely nostalgic. Only the 1949 gangster film, *White Heat,* among Cagney's films early and late, has earned for itself a certain cult status, though its stripped-for-action briskness and its emotional reserve seem to insure that such status will remain minor.

Yet to attempt to speak of Cagney's films thus—that is, as films apart from what Cagney brings to them—is really close to impossible. I once wrote of Fred Astaire that he was, like Keaton and Chaplin, so fully expressive a kinetic object on the screen as to be in himself a movie, a metaphor I might want to apply to Cagney as well, did not another one even more forcefully suggest itself. For if one's sense of a Cagney performance is of a lightning-flash vividness of not only face but entire body (as well as of the electric charge of that singular voice), no less does one sense in it the creation of a distinctive persona, an authentic character; and if Cagney's acting draws, as the best acting in movies usually does, on certain natural properties he possesses as a person, by the time these raw materials find their way to the screen they have been refined to the utmost by an exacting art. No matter how flat the background, the Cagney character is able to emerge as a fully-rounded creation. If Cagney is a movie, no less is he a novel.

In 1932, before, one might have thought, Cagney's persona could have made so firm an impression, Lincoln Kirstein wrote:

> In America there are men and boys lounging in front of drugstores, easing down off trucks, lifting up the hoods of their engines, sighting for a cue on a billiard table, tossing down their little pony of raw whiskey, or even shooting through the pocket of their double-breasted tuxedos. When Cagney gets down off a truck, or deals a hand of cards, or curses, or slaps his girl, or even when he affords himself and her the mockery of sweetness, he is, for the time being, the American hero, whom ordinary men and boys recognize as themselves, and women consider "cute." It is impossible to tell at once whether his handshake is cordial or threatening. He is "cute"—the way Abraham Lincoln said a certain trapper was "cute," that is quick, candid, and ambiguous.*

It is this "cuteness" that allows Cagney, unlike, say, Bogart, to be as at home in musicals as in gangster films, and to be able to project in both very much the same char-

* "James Cagney and the American Hero," *Hound and Horn,* April-June 1932.

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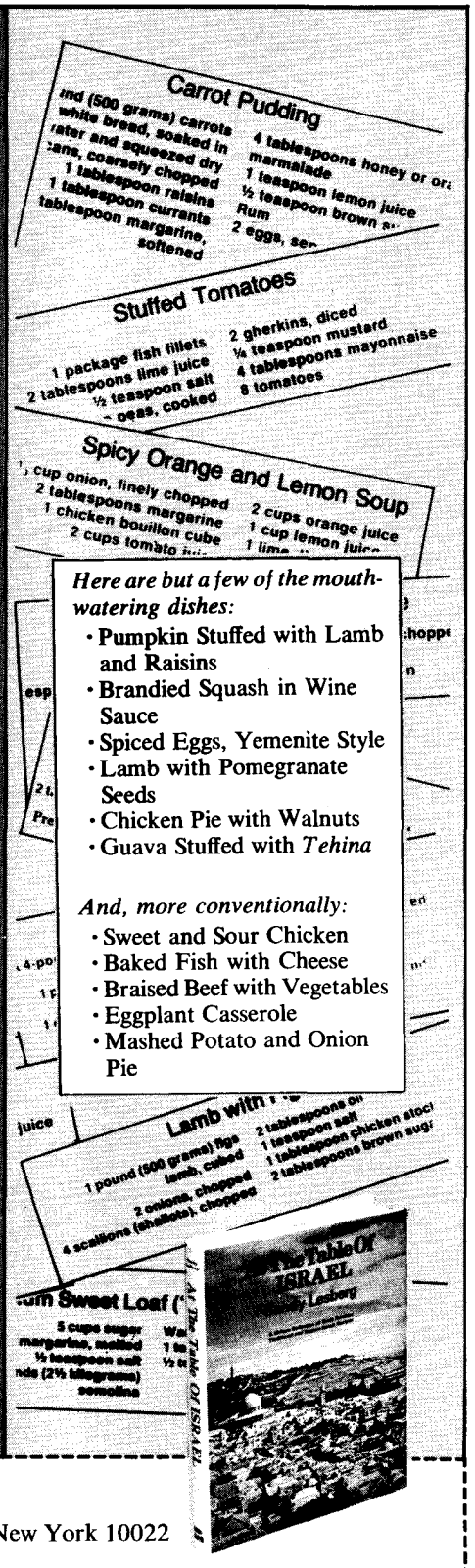
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acterological components. One might be tempted to say that this character grows darker over the years, but, though it's true that he's never envisioned more blackly than in *White Heat*, the spilling over into psychosis which one sees in that film seems always at least potentially there in the Cagney character even at its lightest. One senses it, for instance, in an early comedy such as *Lady Killer* (in which a plot about a mobster who becomes a movie star toys boldly with the public's sense of the "real" Cagney) when Cagney, acting on the idle jest of his leading lady that he give her monkeys for a birthday present, actually has a crate of monkeys delivered to her birthday party, and then, as the animals run amok, laughs convulsively, with a disturbing obliviousness to the distress of everyone else, at the destructive pandemonium he thus unleashes.

And yet the opposite of this is also true. When, before blowing himself sky-high from atop a gas tank at the conclusion of *White Heat*, he drags his wounded body about while laughing delightedly to himself at his own invincible cunning, the laughter, terrible as it is in its expression of a ravaged mind, is nevertheless somehow contagious. Indeed, by this time we have been so disoriented by the film's black-comic twists and turns that his death can seem, in its very outsized extravagance, a kind of triumph. "Made it, Ma! Top of the world!" he shouts, with a commitment to the American dream of exalted self-realization scarcely short of Gatsby's. He is, in this apotheosis, as he's always been, the upwardly-mobile urban American achiever writ large, the manic go-getter; and his ambiguity lies not in how we are meant to take his character, but in the very essence of the character itself. Though his meaning may be unclear, everything there is to know about him is on the screen. There is no sense of Bogartlike interiority. Everything is externalized, everything, in this medium of moving pictures, animated and made visible: everything there in his image.

And so one turns, heart sinking, to the present—to, for instance, the

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latest Woody Allen. For if Cagney can be said to burn a hole in the screen, surely this isn't the same as having a hole there to start with. Though it's true that, "cinematically," *Sleeper* is an advance on Woody Allen's earlier films (it's been given, for instance, an art director's "look"), the problem with it, as with his earlier work, isn't really that of slovenly appearance, or lack of development, or even the wildly uneven mixture of good and bad. All that could be passed over. What can't be passed over is the fact that no one's *there*.

This probably wouldn't be worth saying if it weren't for the increasing noises being made both by and about Woody Allen as the heir to the great silent comedians.* It's true that, physically, he reminds one a bit of Harry Langdon, and that he imagines his screen character in terms of a Harold-Lloydlike striving to succeed. But though I find Woody Allen funny as a monologist, and have found his films funny, too (if never as funny as one hopes they're going to be), somehow *he* isn't funny *in* them. To be sure, *Sleeper* does display a growing dexterity at slapstick, and provides perhaps the first occasion in his films (his cruising dopily in a wheelchair near the beginning) when I can actually recall him and not the lines as what was funny. Given that rate of progress toward comic charisma, Woody Allen might just inch his way past the Three Stooges by the year 2000. And since, for all its greater polish, *Sleeper* is probably less funny than his earlier film *Bananas*, one wonders if the effort is worth it.

Mel Brooks dreams not of Chaplin and Keaton but of Olsen and Johnson, and to say that *Blazing Saddles* hits its mark where *Sleeper* misses isn't saying much. And even this much can't honestly be said; *Blazing Saddles* is a mess, and its worst is far worse than the worst of the Woody Allen. But its mess is rather invigorating, even liberating, and there's nothing quite so audacious in *Sleeper* as the way *Blazing Saddles*' burlesque-Western plot is pulled out of near the end, and, before being resumed, lost for a bewildering length of time while we watch the depicted "filming" of another movie. (Characteristically, Brooks then does the movie-within-a-movie business to death.) And though the lead role, played by Cleavon Little, cries out to have Richard Pryor (who collaborated on the script) in it, what *Blazing Saddles* does have (where *Sleeper* has only funny lines) is funny people: Harvey Korman and Gene Wilder, though both could use better material, among them; and, funniest of all, Mel Brooks himself (at least in his raucous first scene as the governor). Whatever it is that makes one person able to hold the screen and another not, Mel Brooks has it and Woody Allen hasn't; and though it isn't enough, there's no substitute for it. Woody Allen stars in a movie, and the effect is rather like a movie equivalent of those "Music Minus One" records. Mel Brooks appears on screen, and there's a leap in the energy level.

Perhaps this antithesis which Allen and Brooks present in its most rudimentary form might strike one less forcibly at a different moment. But given all the cant now spoken about film being a director's medium, it seems to me worth insisting on the indispensability in film of the performer, and insisting especially during a time when directorial superstars (not to say, grown men) can spend a year of their lives making things like Mike Nichols's *The Day of the Dolphin*. For during a lean period like this one, it's often the performer's art that sustains the life of the medium. It's little more than a bad joke to hear a Sidney Lumet speak of how *Serpico* relates to his other films as an expression of his vision when *Serpico* can scarcely be said to exist apart from what Al Pacino contributes to it. Probably, there's nothing among all of last year's movies I recall with more admiration than the way Jeff Bridges drawls, grins, concentrates his attention, and relaxedly carries himself in Lamont Johnson's *The Last American Hero*, a good, solid genre movie which Bridges's work alone lifts consistently above the conventional. And probably the most artistically exciting thing in American movies since is Jack Nicholson's explosive (and strikingly Cagney-esque) performance as a pugnacious Navy lifer in Hal Ashby's *The Last Detail*, a small, ironic study of men and institutions to which Nicholson brings scale and dimension.

For, in reality, far from the movies not being an actor's medium, there's probably been no other artistic medium in this century whose appeal rests so strongly on the human presence, and in which the human image has occupied a place of such primacy and centrality. And so, especially at a time such as this, the American Film Institute's honoring of Cagney side by side with a director noted for his visual mastery provides a salutary reminder both of how impoverished our movies would be without what a Cagney (or Jeff Bridges, or Jack Nicholson) brings to them, and of how narrowly we usually speak of movies as a medium of images. Because of John Ford's best films, we have a certain image of America. Because of Cagney's, we have a certain image of an American.

* See, for instance, Penelope Gilliatt's profile of Allen, "Guilty, with an Explanation," in the *New Yorker* of February 4, 1974.

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Books in Review

The Rhetoric of Community

THE AMERICAN CONDITION. By RICHARD N. GOODWIN. *Doubleday. 407 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by JAMES Q. WILSON

THE first purpose of philosophy is to clarify; the purpose of rhetoric is to arouse. In this murky but mellifluous book, Richard Goodwin, who once wrote speeches for John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, has aspired to philosophy but produced only rhetoric, and even the rhetoric, though high-minded and serious, is more puzzling than persuasive.

The argument of the book is not easily restated because it is developed at a level of abstraction and with a persistent obscurity that render any effort at summary perilous. Indeed, there is not in a strict sense an argument being made at all: words are not defined, evidence is not adduced, logical connections are not established, contrary cases are not explained. What we read instead is the result of an effort to create and sustain a mood. That effort makes heavy use of such words as "alienation," "community," "shared values," and "oppression." Those readers in whom such phrases evoke persuasive images and resonant echoes will find themselves brought into the state of radical discontent it is the author's desire to produce. Those for whom such terms require careful explanation will be bored or irritated.

The major themes seem to be these: Americans have suffered a great but unnoticed diminution of freedom because they have lost the capacity to fulfill their humanity to the "outer limits fixed by the material conditions and capacity of the time." The gap between our true human fulfillment and our present condition is a measure of our oppression. The chief cause of that oppression has been the controlling power of the large economic bureaucracies that shape our wants, regulate our lives, and in other ways deprive us of our capacity for autonomous action. That lack of autonomy is alienation, and the unowned, uncontrolled bureaucratic institutions of society are the source of that alienation. True freedom requires—indeed, is defined as—the capacity of the individual to master his own destiny, but that in turn can only be accomplished within a community of shared purposes. The individual must establish his own goals, not have them supplied by the ruling bureaucracies, but his goals must be, and in a proper society will be, consistent with the goals of his fellows.

THE central issue is the meaning and nature of freedom. Goodwin rejects the "individualistic" view of freedom as the absence of external constraint. We have been misled, he argues, by the belief that we should aspire to freedom *from* arbitrary commands or political rule. The individualistic ethos expressed in, for example, the Bill of Rights, may have insured that we are free to speak our minds or to be secure from arbitrary arrest, but it has also, and more importantly, countenanced the growth of a market economy, of alienated labor, and of bureaucratic institutions that deprive us of any meaningful thoughts to express or of any meaningful work to perform. Our unfreedom is not that of the dungeon, but of the labyrinth.

By this view, Goodwin associates himself, albeit not very precisely, with a theory of man in society that draws on Plato, Rousseau, and Hegel and places himself in opposition (though I doubt he is aware how fully) to the tradition of Hobbes, Locke, and the *Federalist* papers. Yet he does not deal with the many arguments that have been made over the last century or so for using the term "freedom" to mean the absence of external constraint rather than self-fulfillment or conformity to shared group values. (To him and to the reader, I commend Maurice Cranston's excellent brief book, *Freedom.*) The chief difficulty with using freedom to mean self-fulfillment is that, on a matter of grave importance to men and government, this definition supplies no way of deciding who is free and who is not, or even whether a society has attained freedom or has suppressed it. So long as insuring freedom is an obligation of government, and so long as freedom means the absence of collective constraint, government can be tested by and held accountable to a relatively clear standard. But if freedom means "fulfillment" in a communal setting, then government cannot be tested at all because it must permit each community to impose whatever goals it wishes on its members or, if the national government itself imposes those goals, no one will be at liberty to complain.

Now the price of freedom, defined as the absence of constraint, is the pursuit of self-interest. James Madison understood this and made of it the animating principle of the American Constitution. Tocqueville, who sympathized with America's decision, wrote at length of what this country would lose by having chosen liberty and equality of opportunity over community and some conception of the common good: nobility, gentility, honorable devotion to the common weal, and the capacity of great enterprises entailing large sacrifices. Walter Berns has described (COMMENTARY, October 1973) our continuing ambivalence toward the choice we made in 1789: we wish both the absence of constraint and a sense of community, both government by elected representatives and government through direct participation, both a prosperous society bred of ambition and a tranquil one born of a devotion to nature and comradeship.

JAMES Q. WILSON *is Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard. His latest book,* Political Organization, *has recently been published by Basic Books.*

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Was the price too high? Goodwin does not argue the point, he merely asserts his view that it was, buttressing his opinion with casual references to pollution, manipulated demand, and growing economic concentration. Ignoring for the moment the almost complete lack of evidence for any of his assertions about the failures of the Madisonian principle, what is striking is his own failure to consider the implications of a communal theory of society; he thus allows the reader to forget what we have gained by a libertarian system.

The price of strong communal bonds is greater human conformity, and in a secular age that means conformity, not to an enlarged moral code based on divine revelation, but to both the generous and petty instincts of our fellows. Community supplies security, but at the price of inequality: opportunity and mobility exist in the larger society (the *cosmos polis*, the world city), not in the intimate association. When a government threatens our liberty, there is an appeal; when a community does, there is none. When a government chooses its purposes, men are free to debate and influence that choice; when a community makes manifest its purposes, there is rarely deliberation or even choice.

Goodwin never reveals the shared purposes within which each of us is supposed to realize his own fulfillment. He speaks repeatedly of an "American idea," but never defines it. If individual wants and community preferences conflict, how are they to be reconciled? Goodwin does not answer except to observe that neither Plato nor Nietzsche thought the problem existed. If we are part of a "bond of unity," an "organic community," our preferences and our neighbor's will automatically be reconciled. This faith in an invisible hand would have left even Adam Smith gasping.

But already I am giving too much credit to the author's ideas, for in fact they are never put forth in plain language that would permit serious discussion. Rarely does Goodwin refer to ordinary human experience, much less to empirical inquiries into that experience. Whenever community or alienation or oppression is mentioned, it is an abstraction of a pseudo-Hegelian sort. It is a pity Goodwin does not write in German, for then he could capitalize all his nouns and thereby endow them with even greater mystical significance.

It is all slightly unreal. Who is this alienated, oppressed person who lacks freedom because he lacks community and autonomy? It may be Sartre, or Henry Adams, but it is not my sister, or the family who lives across the street, or the friends I see and work with. Is it anybody?

There is a problem of community, but not the one to which Goodwin alludes. Communal ties are very strong in many neighborhoods and towns; the problem is not their absence, but perceived threats to them. Those threats do not come from General Motors or from the telephone company, but from vandals, people of different races and colors, highway builders, and property-tax assessors. As I write, the annual St. Patrick's Day breakfast in South Boston—a strong and vigorous community if there ever was one—has been cancelled because the Irish leadership of that community wishes to protest the prospect of having their children bused into black schools next fall. If we protect South Boston, are we permitting the Irish to "fulfill their humanity" or are we exacerbating the "alienation" of the blacks? How do we decide?

One might suppose that in his discussion of bureaucracy and the economic forces of society, Goodwin would come down to earth. Except for a few brief, and amusing, asides, he does not. We are told, among other things, that big corporations can do anything they want, that antitrust actions have failed, that profits are no longer an incentive to action or a guide to decisions, that the absence of price differences for similar commodities proves that price competition no longer takes place, that toy commercials on television can create more psychic injury than

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exposure to violence, that inflation was created to increase corporate earnings, and that education merely serves the existing economic process. One can search the book in vain for a scrap of evidence to support any of these assertions or for any recognition that others have thought seriously about such matters and, more frequently than not, concluded that the opposite is the case.

FASHIONING rhetoric is not an unworthy enterprise but it must always be tested by the value of the condition it seeks to bring into being. Goodwin describes no such condition, offering only the most guarded clues as to what a better society might be. As best as one can make out, he favors public control over investment capital, public participation in corporate management by a strategy comparable to the old National Recovery Act, elimination of the wage system, and decentralization of the means of production. It is pointless to take up these proposals for serious discussion because they are offered casually and briefly, in two pages at the end of the book, and explicitly not intended for debate.

But it is tantalizing to speculate about what the author could possibly mean. Does he think that the NRA, by giving official sanction and thus greater force to private efforts at cartelization, would render any of us happier, make any goods cheaper, or reduce rather than increase waste? Ford introduced the Edsel and learned it had blundered; if the NRA had been in existence, Ford would still be making the Edsel, and the government would have seen to it that the car's share of the market was protected. Could he possibly be suggesting that if government controlled the investment decisions, we would build no polluting factories or produce no shoddy goods? As in Italy?

What is even more tantalizing is the quite subordinate status assigned by Goodwin to governmental bureaucracies, as opposed to economic ones, as targets of criticism. He is critical, to be sure, often aptly so, but government to him is merely the political expression of economic conditions, and thus not seriously deserving of separate analysis. Big government is not a problem independent of the economic forces that animate it. A strange view from a man whose rhetoric when he served the Kennedy and Johnson administrations —"The Great Society," "The War on Poverty," "The Alliance for Progress"—contributed in no small measure to the enlargement of government activity and the debasement of public confidence in that government.

Or perhaps not so strange. In Goodwin we have an example of the radicalized Kennedyite, frustrated by the inability of government, on command, to produce greatness, end poverty, or make our allies progress. One might have concluded from that experience that the problems are more difficult and the government less effective than first supposed. Or

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one could decide, as Goodwin did, that the entire fabric of society is rotten, and for economic reasons, and thus that the only correct posture is one of "defiance, outrage, and conflict."

OUTRAGE is often a constructive motive, but it can never be a solution. It is only a mood, and usually one that clouds one's vision. And so this book. Its tone suggests that it was written at two o'clock in the morning when the darkest hours of the night produce the deepest intellectual reveries but not the clearest insight; when phrases, snatches of ideas, and hastily-scribbled quotations take on an enlarged meaning as they are pondered through a false sense of heightened awareness and a sweet existential anguish. Many of us have written down our ideas during these hours but we usually throw them away the next day when they are seen to be as vaporous as the night airs that produced them. Richard Goodwin kept his, and published them.

A Hebrew Poet

SONGS OF JERUSALEM AND MYSELF. By YEHUDA AMICHAI. Translated by HAROLD SCHIMMEL. *Harper & Row. 120 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by LEON WIESELTIER

YEHUDA AMICHAI was born in Germany in 1924, and in 1936 emigrated to Palestine, where he eventually fought in the Palmach during the War of Independence. He has published three volumes of poems in Hebrew (as well as novels and plays), the earliest dating from 1948. The present volume is a collection of competent and sometimes masterful translations (by the poet Harold Schimmel) from all three volumes. (It is actually the second volume of translations to appear; the first, entitled simply *Poems,* was done by Assia Guttman and published in 1966.)

LEON WIESELTIER, *a senior at Columbia College, has been awarded a Kellett Fellowship for 1974-76.*

This is an excellent collection—it includes Amichai's two beautiful and brilliant song cycles, *Jerusalem 1967* and *The Achziv Poems*—and deserves to be widely read. Amichai's poems must compel the attention not only of devotees of modern Hebrew literature, but of anyone concerned with the state of contemporary poetry in general.

Amichai's poems are rooted in the omnipresent landscape of Israel; the topography of his shifting emotional life is very much the shifting topography of the land for which he fought: the ruggedness of the hills, the straining intransigence of the desert, the sweating sun and bitter salt and indifferent winds of the beach, the confusions of the Old City of Jerusalem made new—all are causes, settings, personifications of his feelings. These are poems of place, and their almost tangible evocations of the violent contrasts and mysterious beauty of the Israeli landscape infuse them with a materiality no less worn and vital than the poet's own.

Amichai's is a poetry without a poetics, invoking nothing but the poet's own rich, painful, and sometimes epiphanous experience; and it is an indication of his stature, at a time when "honesty" in writing has become trite to the point of cliché, that he is able to make the confessional mode seem once again an apt vehicle for conveying truths about the world. As a poet Amichai demands of himself an unrelenting transparency, a self-consciousness which is a form of sustained vulnerability in the face of experience. His poems are soundings of himself, readings of his strength to absorb experience without sacrificing this necessary vulnerability. They are also carefully wrought expressions of a life which is itself not carefully wrought, which is constantly at the mercy of time and its own frailties:

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for its integrity on nothing but what he is trying to convey—that he is a man, that he is just Yehuda Amichai, but that that is fine.

Amichai has a bitter kind of sixth sense that intuits almost immediately the limits of situations, their inevitable ends:

> Longing for the past
> colored our eyes with a double assurance
> of what will never change
> and one can never return to—

His poems are measures of change, of dauntless time:

> We wait for rain more than ever.
> There are many grapes this year: the last are
> yellow like the color of wild wasps
> which are their death from within.

He is always dating things: himself, his father, his loves, the land, Jerusalem. All these moments, Wordsworth's "spots of time," are evoked but never frozen. And the poet lives a very full life; he is poet, lover, father, son, soldier, traveler, Jew. But since he looks nowhere outside his existence to find its meaning, his roles serve to elucidate one another, one experience becoming the metaphor for another. Amichai constructs his poems by balancing one moment against the next, by forcing the many dimensions of his life upon one another in the hope that the life itself will emerge whole.

This is most dramatically apparent in the wistful way he writes about the Jewish religious tradition. His is hardly a religious sensibility, and yet religious symbols still have meaning for him of a surprising kind. The sacred in his poems is a metaphor for the profane, the appreciation of the modest purpose and order implicit in the vagaries of the everyday:

> God's hand in the world
> like my mother's
> in the guts of the slaughtered hen
> on Friday.
> What does God see beyond the window
> as he puts his hand into the world?
> What does my mother see?

The intense sexuality of Amichai's lyrics must also be taken in the context of this insistence that life as a whole is to be found immanent in each of his experiences. For the sexual realm offers the most charged initiation into the experience of limit, as consummate pleasure passes inevitably into consummate pain. The account of sexual pain in *The Achziv Poems* is probably the most haunting rendering of the erotic ever undertaken in Hebrew verse.

Amichai's experience of the world is above all an experience of its intractability, of the strenuous resistance of his situation to his will. There is thus a powerful tactile element in his poems' imagery: he writes often of hardness, of rock and stone. But the poet's sense of his own self is likewise of something hard, weighty, virile, perdurable. It is, in other words, a self well suited to the world in which it finds itself—a self for which the center must hold. Amichai's muse is resiliency, and personal courage; his campaign in his poetry is to turn the richness of circumstance to the advantage of a self that will remain intact despite pain and pleasure; he sees the punishing world much as Keats did, not as a vale of tears but as "a vale of Soul-making."

Amichai has achieved a kind of precarious peace with the oscillations of happiness and sadness that constitute his life, and out of this peace rises the elemental lyricism of his poetry. The love poems in particular are written with a grave gentleness, a sense of wonderment at the ephemeral nature of it all. His poems offer seasoned comfort, the humble contentment that comes of resignation without surrender. In this spirit Amichai prays:

> My father, my king, groundless love
> and groundless hate have formed my face
> like the face of this dry land.
> The years have made me a taster of pain. . . .
> My father, my king, may my face
> be not torn by laughter or weeping.
>
> My father, my king, make all that happens
> between lust and sadness
> not torment me too much; make all things
> I do against my will
> seem by my will. And my will
> like flowers.

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In Search of Unity

FRAGMENTS OF THE CENTURY: A SOCIAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY. By MICHAEL HARRINGTON. *Saturday Review Press/E.P. Dutton. 246 pp. $7.95.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL NOVAK

ALMOST a decade ago, in 1965, Daniel Callahan edited a brace of autobiographical essays by "young Catholic leaders," including Andrew M. Greeley, Wilfrid Sheed, Garry Wills, and almost twenty others. In his introduction, Callahan noted that nearly all the contributors felt distinctly uncomfortable in the autobiographical mode. As the deadline approached, he received plaintive letters: "Does the essay have to be personal?" Fear of autobiography, preference for the abstract, has been an American-Catholic affliction.

It is hard to imagine a comparable sample of young Jewish writers agonizing over the autobiographical mode. Elie Wiesel has told us that "life is story"; that story is personal, not abstract; that the teller of the story cannot hide; that, whatever the ironic distance or detachment, self-revelation is one of a tradition's keenest pleasures.

Yet here is Michael Harrington telling us that his new book "is autobiographical, but not an autobiography. I have no desire to write a confession in the manner of Rousseau. . . . I speak of myself in order to understand better the age in which I live. I want to be intimate and nostalgic about an epoch, not about me." In this objectivization of the self, Harrington establishes the basic drama of his book. The opening line of chapter six, "My nervous breakdown began at a Unitarian Church in San Diego one Sunday evening in March 1965," suggests that it is also the basic struggle in his life.

Harrington presents himself partly as the self-effacing, objective Irish-American from St. Louis; partly as a sophisticated and successful *ingénu* in the Jewish world of social democracy in New York City. He does not easily negotiate the differences, the nuances, the internal logics of those two quite various worlds. He makes social democracy over into his own mold. The patterns of Jesuit doctrine, Pascalian wager, acts of faith replace the traditions, passions, and personal conflicts we are accustomed to in Jewish accounts of the same world.

Irish-Catholic reviewers like John Deedy of *Commonweal* have apparently read Harrington's voyage without feeling any bump or shock; from his early act of faith in Roman Catholicism until his later act of faith in socialism, no basic symbol changes—the content and the circumstances alter, but the world view is astonishingly continuous, smooth, unruptured. So it often happens that those who pass over from one world to another do

MICHAEL NOVAK *is associate director in humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation and the author of, among other works,* The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics, Belief and Unbelief, *and, most recently,* Choosing Our King *(Macmillan).*

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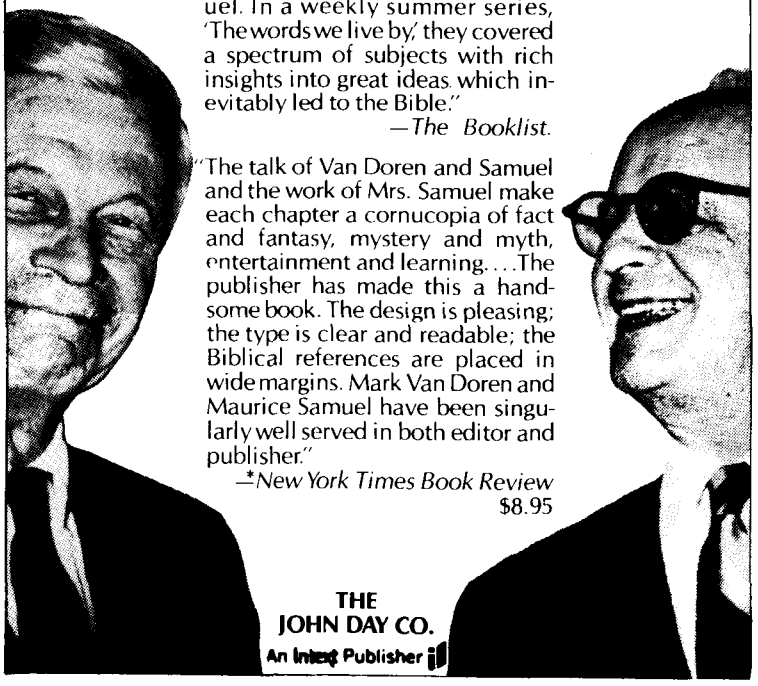

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not so much change themselves as appropriate materials to their own purposes.

In his brief prologue, Harrington calls his family background middle-class. That very wide net does not arrest the fact, which we later learn, that his father was a quite successful patent lawyer; in St. Louis, his family ranks high financially and in social status. The Irish Catholics of St. Louis are not, we are told, "wounded" in the way that Studs Lonigan of Chicago was, nor in the way many Irish of the Eastern cities have been, by the closed viciousness of the regnant social class. In St. Louis, they were *part* of the ruling class. Harrington praises his family's Americanization.

In his first chapter, "A Pious Apostasy," Harrington describes how he slid away, first, from the narrow forms of Catholic faith the St. Louis Jesuits had taught him; then, later, from the "existential leap" he had learned from Kierkegaard and St. Augustine in his days at the *Catholic Worker*. Undramatically, it occurred to him he was an atheist. Without tears.

In the fashion of former Catholics, he chides latter-day Catholic philosophers because the encounter with the "nameless one" of which they write "may well provide spiritual sustenance for a small minority of sophisticated intellectuals. It will not, however, sustain a church or provide a basis for a culture." Two hundred pages later, Harrington writes with romantic hope about a humble socialist gathering in a seedy hotel in February 1973: "We were a handful of people, perhaps eighty in all, the defeated remnant of a defeated remnant." Enough to sustain a church or provide the basis for a culture?

His apologetics for socialism are almost identical to the Jesuit apologetics he learned in his earlier years: "I do not romanticize, even though there is now a Pascalian cast to my Marxism. I am excruciatingly aware of the socialist failures of the past and our woeful inadequacies in the present. . . . Socialism is today the dream of a majority of mankind, even, as Hungary and Poland in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 show, those who have been oppressed by impostors speaking its name. And yet, after more than a century, it is still beginning, a task to be accomplished, not a destiny to be awaited." Thus preacheth the retreat master about the Catholic church. "Socialism," Harrington says, "is problematic, even difficult to imagine. . . ." Thus, also, the Vision of God.

Harrington makes three contributions to the recent discussion of social issues. First, he is far more conservative, both in instinct and in analysis, than he frequently pretends. He has some inner need to be well over on the Left, among the radicals, even when his better judgment drags its feet, kicks, protests. His account of the New Left is alternately harsh and biting (he attacks its "intolerance," "conformism," and "confused young idealists") and embarrassingly sycophantic (he apologizes over and over for being "wrong," after having shown that he really wasn't very wrong). His analysis of "the new class," its biases, its miscalculations, its remoteness both from reality and from any conceivable popular base, confirms the by now almost universal view, first enunciated when it was not fashionable by those Harrington calls "the liberal conservatives."

Secondly, Harrington wants to live it all again—finding "reasons to hope" in the "rising generations of the Left" who may yet "become part of a new majority movement to transform American society," a movement in which, once again, he would "hope to take part." The New Left of the 60's, he believes, "signals a new mass intelligentsia which has been won to some important leftist ideas." In a section on Nathan Glazer's "The Limits of Social Policy,"* Harrington still dreams: "We failed in the 60's, not because we did too much, but because we did too little." He fudges the true point: not that we did too much, or did too little, but that we were—and remain—demonstrably ignorant of the effects, often ironic, of our interventions.

Harrington celebrates the inevitability of collectivization: "The

* Originally published in COMMENTARY, September 1971.

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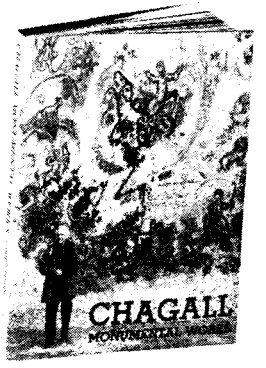

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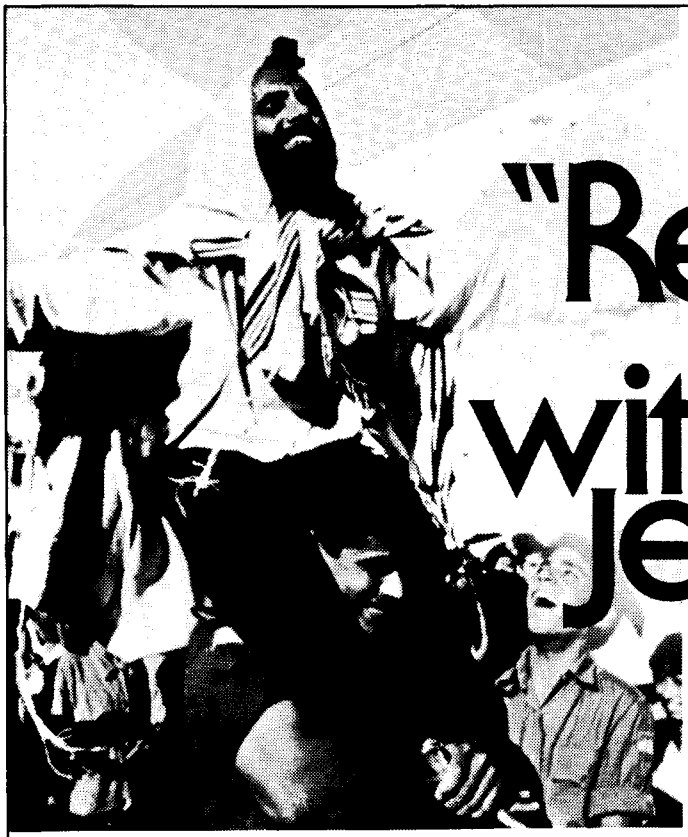

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—Isaiah 66:10

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planet is collectivizing itself everywhere: in America, Russia, China, the Third World." He wants us to be bold, radical, decisive. But he is no more filled with light about what precisely we ought to do today, and what may be its precise effects, than Glazer. The limits of social knowledge bind him; but his faith, hope (a recurrent word for him, almost desperate in its incantation), and enthusiasm are great.

The deepest dispute between Harrington and the "liberal conservatives," by his account, is his ability to "see" the revolution, whereas, "All they miss is the most important happening of the age—a revolution that is inevitable in everything except its outcome." But underlying this comparative percipience is a quite different judgment about the virtue of "the new mass intelligentsia." Harrington admits that this new class may be elitist and dangerous; but he has "hope." He is for the modern, deracinated society,* for progress, for the future, for science, for technology. He celebrates. Whereas his critics see *hubris,* ignorance masquerading as knowledge, decisive actions whose massive effects are the opposite of their intentions. They count the costs of the destruction of organic communities, and they dread the intolerant attitudinizing and sloppy sloganeering that seem to spore faster than critical enlightenment in that "new mass intelligentsia."

THE third contribution Harrington makes concerns the discussion of "nervous breakdowns," as in the Eagleton affair. He is brave enough to bring the subject up at all, and he makes some good points; *viz.,* that serious nervous disorders are not to be made light of, out of misplaced liberal sentiment. (Liberals, however, not "the Yahoos" he needlessly attacks, clamored loudest for the sacrifice of Eagleton.) There is something awkward and wrong, however, in Harrington's courageous account of his "nervous breakdown." He discusses it in abstract, theoretical terms. He writes about psychoanalysis as if it were a foreign discipline, the terrain of "educated secularists" (as he calls them), who "were atheists and agnostics and could not take their cares to God or one of his priests." For one who is not writing autobiography, this chapter is strangely intimate; and yet distant, cool, exhibiting a painful split. One's heart goes out to Harrington, as his did to Eagleton.

But one's mind, as his mind in respect to Eagleton, wants to question Harrington on the most basic, fundamental point of socialism: alienation. If he had not shown us these "fragments of the century," it might be illegitimate to make such demands of him. But now that he has raised the matter publicly, one must ask him publicly: Was it only "social vertigo" during this "strange twilight of the bourgeois era" that afflicted him, this "outsider . . . patronized by the newly created, and quite affluent,

* "The most modern—and deracinated—[places] are the most healthy."

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audience for social criticism"? Or something far more personal and morally dangerous?

MICHAEL HARRINGTON is a valuable writer in our midst. But he does not convince us he can fuse personal vision to social vision in singleness of heart. One feels throughout a double alienation: a failure to grasp the limits of his own imagination, Irish-Catholic to the core and not at all at one with the milieu of Max Shachtman, Irving Howe, and others of whom he writes as though they shared more than they do; and a failure to grasp the extent to which socialism is for him not a vision that wells up from inside, from the heart, but an external vision to which he has no better relation than "faith," no stronger cord than "hope," no deeper ultimate commitment than "a wager." Some day, perhaps, this faith, too, may slide away, as undramatically as did his faith in the Irish-Catholic sky-God. On the evidence here presented, these fragments cry out for unity.

The Public Platform

H. G. WELLS: A BIOGRAPHY. By NORMAN and JEANNE MACKENZIE. *Simon & Schuster. 447 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by DAN JACOBSON

H. G. WELLS was the son of a professional cricketer and of a housekeeper to a wealthy family. Mrs. Wells, a pious and melancholy woman, had one great ambition for her youngest son: to see him successfully established as a draper's assistant. After several thwarted attempts, the boy finally managed to escape from this fate by way of teaching and part-time study for a B.Sc. degree. He became a coach in a correspondence college, and began to write articles on popular science for the cheap press. Only after publishing a couple of textbooks on elementary biology and physiology did he turn to fiction.

His genius was recognized almost immediately, and within a matter of years he had become a world-famous figure. His books earned him great wealth and influence, and brought him the friendship of many of the leading intellectuals and politicians of Edwardian and Georgian England. He dined with duchesses, argued with presidents and prime ministers, and slept with every handsome girl he could coax into his bed. (Quite apart, that is, from his two wives and his several "serious" mistresses.) The public at large revered him as a sage and prophet, who had foreseen the coming of aerial and tank warfare, space travel, and the atomic bomb; there can be no doubt that by rendering such developments imaginatively plausible to other men, he helped to make them come true. He traveled about the globe, telling people how to live; he built houses in England and

DAN JACOBSON, *the novelist, essayist, and critic, is a regular contributor to these pages from London. Mr. Jacobson's most recent novel is* The Wonder-Worker *(Atlantic-Little, Brown).*

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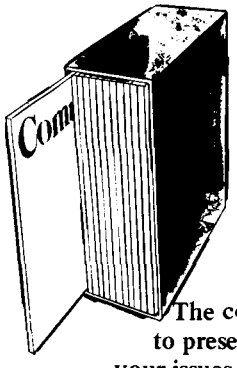

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France according to his whim; he was a great host and entertainer, a passionate player of indoor and outdoor games, many of them of his own invention, and a fond father to his children.

In addition, of course, he was profoundly unhappy, dissatisfied with everything he had achieved. Who isn't? He squandered his gifts in evanescent journalism and in slipshod novels of ideas. He was pathologically vain, blustering, showy, and quarrelsome. Like many famous and obscure writers, he nurtured grudges against those who praised his books insufficiently, while being singularly free with abuse of the work of others. Finally, he outlived himself. By the end of his life, his biographers tell us, publishers were somewhat embarrassed when they received yet another voluminous, unsalable manuscript from him. He died in 1946 at the age of eighty, in what one feels to be appropriate style: prophesying the imminent demise of mankind.

And now, of all that activity, of all those words and journeys, what remains? For me the answer is simple: the memory of afternoons of my boyhood, when I read and reread the early scientific romances and social comedies, and even some of the later "discussion" novels, with a passion of enjoyment that few other writers were capable of inducing. Those novels, many of them describing marvels and impossibilities, were themselves like boxes of magic. You opened them, and you were at once taken over by a mind more generous and agitated, more reckless and amusing, more lurid and tender, than your own could ever be. Whether you stood in imagination behind the counter of a draper's shop in Maidstone, drunkenly celebrating Kipps's unexpected inheritance, or fled with Dr. Moreau from his creation, the Puma-Man —"An awful face rushing upon me, not human, not animal, but hellish, brown, seamed with red branching scars, red drops starting out upon it, and the lidless eyes ablaze"—the adventures you went through were always infused with a specially free or frank quality of high-spirited wonder. Stealing from you your sense of time and of the place you lived in, the words on the page made all further miraculous dealings with time and space seem easy, natural, irresistible.

In comparison with the creative power he possessed, or was intermittently possessed by, during the first ten or fifteen years of his career, everything else about Wells's life appears curiously banal. Even his success and worldwide fame. Even the loss of his power, or his rejection of it, and his descent into well-paid garrulity. Even the bitterness of his death.

IN THEIR workmanlike, sensible biography, Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie make much of the paradoxical nature of his thought, of his alternations between optimism and pessimism, of the war within him between the impulse to build and his compulsion to wreck; they analyze the contradictions in his character as judiciously as they describe his entanglements with the Fabians or his fights with his mistresses. They repeatedly point out, sometimes with an understandable air of weariness, that Wells was an ambitious and irascible man, a born rebel and iconoclast, who continually demanded of mankind that it should at once set about creating a perfect New Republic, or New World Order, which would be totally rational in every respect. He was a hater of the masses, a believer in the desirability of rule by elites, who nevertheless thought of himself as a socialist and humanitarian. He was a trumpeter of the virtues of the scientific attitude, who used the language of the Book of Revelations to describe the choices before his audience. He constantly drew up programs for the salvation of humanity; and like many a savior before and since, incontinently cursed it to destruction because it didn't obey him. He was also, as the Mackenzies fail to remark, a writer of immense comic gifts who apparently never asked himself the simple, deflating question as to what he and everyone else would actually *do* in his sanitized, fully planned world of tomorrow.

However, all this describes or defines only the would-be encyclopedist and universal mind, the

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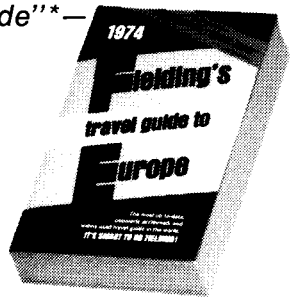

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self-appointed boss of the world, the author of scores of books with titles like *Anticipations, The Open Conspiracy, The Outlook for Homo Sapiens, The Salvaging of Civilization,* etc., and the contemptuously didactic novels associated with them. To the real novelist and fantasist, the author of *The Island of Dr. Moreau* or *The History of Mr. Polly,* the fate of the race wasn't an occasion for exhortation or a source of irritation, but a series of vivid images, a story to be breathlessly related, a terror to be stared down, a surprise to be relished to the utmost, an intimate joke to be shared with everyone capable of appreciating it. Even the brilliant, improbable trajectory of his own career could, in *Tono-Bungay,* be regarded by him with an entirely human mixture of amazement and wistfulness, as if it were the journey of one of his own space travelers.

In revisiting the books after many years, it didn't surprise me to find that Wells had from the very first a remarkable gift for narration, for that instinctive rhythm of alternately giving and withholding information, which is an elemental necessity of the novelist's art, and without which intelligence, sensitivity, wise opinions, and the rest are of no avail to him. What I did not expect, though, was to discover that the early Wells was so formidable and inventive a stylist. The freshness and audacity of his language was obviously a source of delight to him; it was also an index of an exceptionally acute mind and nimble sensibility. At its best, his style was as much at ease among his apocalyptic visions as in passages of comedy and pathos of a kind traditional to the English novel.

> As I put on pace, night followed day like the flapping of a black wing. The dim suggestion of the laboratory seemed to fall away from me, and I saw the sun hopping swiftly across the sky, leaping it every minute, and every minute marking a day. . . . Presently, as I went on, still gaining velocity, the palpitation of night and day merged into one continuous grayness; the sky took on a wonderful deepness of blue, a splendid luminous color like that of an early twilight, the

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jerking sun became a streak of fire, a brilliant arch in space, the moon a fainter fluctuating band; and I could see nothing of the stars, save now and then a brighter circle flickering in the blue.

Thus the Time-Traveler, making his first journey. And the hero of *Tono-Bungay,* describing the chapel he was forced to attend as a boy, in company with his aunt and uncle:

> They met with twenty or thirty other darkened and unclean people, all dressed in dingy colors that would not show the dirt, in a little brick-built chapel with a spavined roarer of a harmonium. . . . The sounds and then the scene return . . . a fat woman with asthma, an old Welsh milk-seller with a tumor on his bald head, who was the intellectual leader of the sect, a huge-voiced haberdasher with a black beard, a white-faced, extraordinarily pregnant woman. . . . I recall again the way in which at the conclusion of the service the talk remained pious in form but became medical in substance, and how the women got together for obstetric whisperings.

In the same year in which he published *Tono-Bungay,* with its painfully touching account of the hero's courtship and forlorn marriage to a girl as ignorant of life as himself, Wells also brought out *Ann Veronica,* one of the most propagandistic and (at the time) sensational of his novels, in which he figured forth more boldly than ever before as the emancipator of mankind in general and of womankind in particular. It is written in a style which it is polite to call mawkish. Subsequently he never really looked back, despite the pleas of such friends as Conrad and Henry James. He saw no reason to. Doubtless, if he could revisit the earth today and see just how emancipated women have become since he wrote *Ann Veronica,* and how we have followed the path he sketched out toward the moon and beyond, he would feel the choices he made as a writer—exhortation and instruction rather than art; the public platform rather than solitary self-communings—to have been justified a thousand

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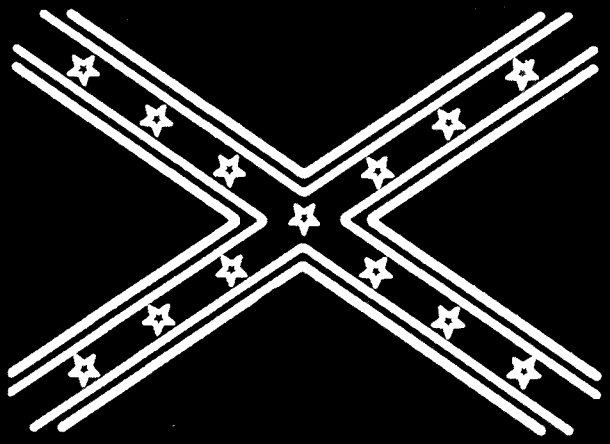

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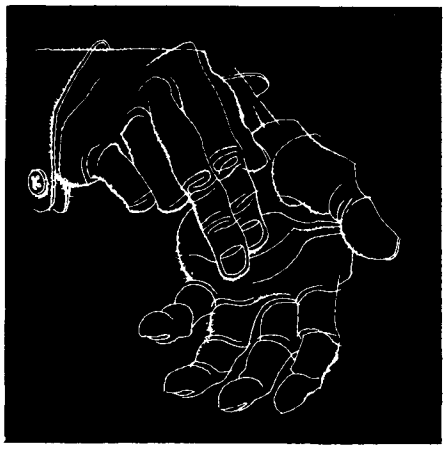

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times over. What have James and Conrad wrought, in comparison? Only books!

Yet at the same time, I am sure, he would be enraged and incredulous to see that though so much of what he dreamed about has come to pass, our inner lives remain the babble they always were, our public lives are as messy and murderous as before. We have let him down once again, it seems. . . . Indeed, some of us even have the impertinence to accuse him of letting us down. We conclude that, unlike James and Conrad, Wells was incapable of contemplating for long the truth that the human condition is incurable *and* that the patient will live forever. "The difference between us is fundamental," Conrad wrote to him late in their friendship. "You don't care for humanity but think they are to be improved. I love humanity but know they are not."

The Mama of Dada

CHARMED CIRCLE: GERTRUDE STEIN & COMPANY. By JAMES R. MELLOW. *Praeger. 528 pp. $12.95.*

STAYING ON ALONE: LETTERS OF ALICE B. TOKLAS. Edited by EDWARD BURNS. *Liveright. 426 pp. $11.95.*

Reviewed by SONYA RUDIKOFF

GERTRUDE STEIN! The name rings like a bell announcing a procession of the avant-garde, heralding, in fact, the most striking figure in that most exemplary avant-garde, the Paris of the early 20th century and *l'entre deux guerres.* James R. Mellow, an art critic for the New York *Times,* has written his book as much about the milieu as about the famous personage who liked to think of herself as its center, but even those who might dispute her claim to primacy would grant her prominence in the contemporary mythology of the avant-garde. She was of course called "the mama of dada," although that was strictly speaking inaccurate. Journalese also termed her "the matron saint of modern art," and many readers may recall the cheeky limerick that linked her with Albert Einstein and Jacob Epstein: in a canonical drama of neglect-acceptance-adulation, the puzzles of her writing were thought to exhibit the same degree of difficulty as the calculation of mathematics and the densities of modern sculpture. Her story was naturally no *vie de bohème;* she was neither poor nor struggling, she came from a comfortable California-Jewish background, had been to Radcliffe and Johns Hopkins, and was launched by her brother, Leo, into the Paris of the turn of the century almost like a Jamesian heroine. There were always friends, trips, diversions, and interesting connections to the life around her, there was always money, and, although recognition, or what she called *"gloire,"* eluded her, there was certainly fame and notoriety beginning quite early. By World War I, she had become the legendary Gertrude Stein.

This figure, the type of the modern difficult writer, attracted to her side philosophers, writers, artists, musicians, scene designers, traveling Americans, journalists, royalties, Swedes, Hungarians, and others who defy precise designation. Word spread of the painting collection formed early in the century with Leo, after the example of their brother, Michael Stein, who had discovered Matisse. The collection of Picassos, Matisses, Cézannes, Renoirs, and other treasures of the modern movement was remarkable, as all would agree who saw it then or later, when it was shown in New York. And not the least of its attributes, its interest for contemporary collectors, lies in the very shrewdness of the investments made by those canny responsive clients when few other people were buying such art. (Later, in the 20's, even Gertrude Stein couldn't afford to buy Picassos.) Long before she had achieved any recognition for her own work, Gertrude Stein had encouraged and sponsored the work of others. Her role in the avant-garde drama thus became a double one: there was the exemplary writer, attempting a serious literary experiment—mocked by the world at large but

SONYA RUDIKOFF, *who has written for* Partisan Review, Dissent, *and* Arts, *contributed "The Problem of Euthanasia" to our February number.*

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understood by the "charmed circle"—and, in another part of the forest, there was the perceptive patron, spotting greatness, defending her choices, buying courageously what the established critics and collectors scorned. She and Leo frequently took photographs of their salon with its now famous pictures covering the walls. Word spread even to California, where the Michael Steins had returned with *their* Matisses.

The subtitle of Mr. Mellow's study, "Gertrude Stein & Company," suggests how much of a corporate effort it all was in that golden 20's time, how many people were involved, and how their actions reinforced one another. His thorough and carefully-researched treatment of all that period of Gertrude Stein's life is very good, and he manages to achieve a tone of intelligent sympathetic interest without the cloying falsity of partisan naiveté which has too often been characteristic of Gertrude Stein's biographers. His account of her 1934 American tour provides an interesting story, and, if the narrative of her life in the late 30's and during World War II is less detailed, it is nevertheless adequate. His bibliography is lengthy, his sources copious, his notes and references are prodigious, and his manner is discursive and brisk. He had wanted to write about Gertrude Stein the real person, not the legend, and he has succeeded.

Perhaps the most interesting —and least legendary—part of her life was the early part, the years before World War I, and it is to this period that Mr. Mellow devotes half his book. Gertrude Stein's family and its fortunes, her childhood with Leo and the others, her young girlhood and young womanhood, the Cambridge and Baltimore years, the first decade in Paris—these have been overshadowed by the more familiar scenes of the salon in the Rue de Fleurus. New material and new scholarly work have illuminated this time in Gertrude Stein's life and its relation to her early work, especially to *Three Lives* (1909). Much more is known now about her efforts at automatic writing, her work under William James and his encourage-

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ment of her medical studies, her friendships in Cambridge, Baltimore, and New York. The milieus, the atmosphere of intense friendships among young women, the relation with Leo, the genesis of lesbian life, all are discussed both biographically and with reference to the early—and until recently unknown—manuscripts, *Q.E.D.* and *Fernhurst,* which deal with such attachments. More than ever, the young Gertrude Stein and her brother and their circle, their moral exertions, their scruples, their passions and discriminations, all seem to issue from *The Wings of the Dove* or *The Ambassadors.*

ALTHOUGH World War II dispersed their milieu, Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas did not follow the migration of the avant-garde to America, but instead stayed on in France all through the war. They lived in the country, they struggled through various adventures with the French and the Germans, but they survived the war to become almost the first to welcome the American soldiers who came to liberate France. And thus began a new career: Mellow calls it "the liberation of Gertrude Stein." She welcomed the G.I.'s, entertained, befriended, adopted, and adored them, and she became one of the oddest pin-up girls of that early postwar period. She spoke in her most American voice, as if justified by all her early cranky patriotism of *The Making of Americans,* and became at once a French and an American heroine, quoted, interviewed, photographed, lionized, and visited by everyone as she had never been visited before. It was a triumph over the wartime isolation, the long separation from her native land, the many years of neglect of her work, and her notorious reputation as a difficult gnomic literary persona. She wrote *Brewsie and Willie,* a paean to the American G.I., and she presented herself as a homey American type, a pioneer woman, as American as apple pie. She died in 1946, before she could savor fully all that this new kind of fame could give her (she would have been one hundred years old this year—how she would have relished that). As she died she made

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one of the memorable comments of her life. Asking Alice at the bedside, "Well, what is the answer?" and receiving no reply, she then said, "In that case, what is the question?" More than anything she is known to have said, like "Remarks are not literature," or "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," or "You are all a lost generation," or "America is the oldest country in the world," this deathbed message insured her a place and a posthumous stature.

A JAMESIAN heroine, too, was Alice Toklas, from California also, hesitating over the Michael Steins' invitation to go to Europe with them, then traveling with Harriet Levy, another adventurous young woman, joining the Stein circle in Paris and in Fiesole, making those excursions to the Italian hill towns, and finally becoming indispensable to Gertrude Stein. She walked, typed, edited, admired, managed, commented, supervised; she did needlework, complex cooking, gardening, sewing, and exercised every skill necessary to further the imperatives of Gertrude Stein's genius, remaining her devoted companion for nearly forty years. By 1910 Alice had displaced Leo at the Rue de Fleurus, and by 1914 the calling card stated "Miss Stein, Miss Toklas."

Alice Toklas seems to have been an extremely gifted, complex, perceptive, and witty person. Mr. Mellow's study demonstrates this, and it is even more striking in the collection of Alice's letters recently published, which presents a much older Alice Toklas of the years after Gertrude's death. They were a famously devoted couple, with Alice explicitly designating herself as votary to Gertrude's genius. Indeed, one of the many stories has it that *Wives of Geniuses I Have Sat With* was an early title for Gertrude's *tour de force, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas,* that famous best-seller of 1933. The kind of unstinting, selfless, single-minded devotion Alice gave to Gertrude was remarkable and almost without parallel, certainly unlike most of the relationships in the "charmed circle." Alice lived on until 1967 when she was almost ninety, tending Gertrude's flame,

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cherishing Gertrude's memory, Gertrude's friends, Gertrude's pictures. It is one of the unpleasant ironies of the story that that famous painting collection—to whose preservation Alice gave so much, and which was supposed to provide the means of support for her declining years—was in fact the cause of the penury in which Alice lived out her life. That ending, too, is Jamesian, as is the death of Gertrude's nephew, the residual beneficiary, the quarrel with the children, the lawyer's negligence in providing Alice's income, and then the sequestering of the pictures while Alice was away in Rome. Alice, with poor vision, could hardly see the blank spots on the walls then, but could see all the pictures in her memory.

GERTRUDE STEIN's fame has not flagged: as patron and client of modern art, and as "difficult" or "experimental" writer, she plays a prominent part in the history of the avant-garde, and her importance is repeatedly underlined in all the studies which followed all the popular recollections and memoirs. Her opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, with music by Virgil Thomson, has been performed many times since its first production in 1934, and in the contemporary theater this abstract fantasy about Saint Thérèse and landscape finds a natural place. The opera about Susan B. Anthony, *The Mother of Us All*, has had a similar if less enthusiastic revival. The resurgence of feminism in the 60's and 70's has inspired many to adopt Gertrude Stein as a heroine and as an example of a woman's alternative style of life.

But what of her work? Has it been rediscovered, and reappraised, apprehended anew? Does it continue to generate interest? That part of the avant-garde story is less clear, and Mr. Mellow is guarded in his comments, occasionally irritated or bored by the work, and perhaps not especially interested in the "product" of Gertrude Stein & Company. Actually, her importance in the development of modern prose is great. It was through her influence that Hemingway developed his laconic declarative style with its serious insistence and its simple repetitive, incantatory rhythm, and it is from Hemingway himself that contemporary prose learned one of its voices. Nevertheless, Gertrude Stein's early work that so affected Hemingway has not subsequently been consulted by many readers either for interest or pleasure. *Three Lives* is a classic of this type, like *La Princesse de Clèves* or *Adolphe*, but how often is it taken down from the shelf? Who would voluntarily read *The Making of Americans*, or the plays, or *Tender Buttons*, unless obliged to do so? Her art criticism, although frequently and piously referred to, is not notably illuminating, and, in any case, her interest was less in art than in certain artists she knew, liked, or disliked, such as Braque, Matisse, Picasso, Bérard, Sir Francis Rose, Berman, Marie Laurencin, and others. Like her writing about Ulysses S. Grant, or Washington, or aspects of American history, it was all quite personal, that is, of interest to her only as it nourished her own sense of her own genius. The effect of Cubism on her writing has often been cited as an example of the new direction she was attempting, and her word portraits are said to rely on the same sort of unity in fragmentation. Even if this dubious analogy is accepted, however, it does not make the work more resonant or available.

Hemingway did not acknowledge too graciously Gertrude Stein's importance for him; in fact, he went out of his way to denigrate her. There was Sherwood Anderson . . . but who else? Finally, it would be hard to find a writer who claimed continuity with Gertrude Stein. She saw her efforts with language as similar to those of others, say, Eliot—*purifier les mots de la tribu*—but there was merely a polite visit and letter from the editor of *The Criterion*, no shock of recognition. The fact is that all our ideas of the "difficult" writer and the "difficult" work of art have changed profoundly since the avant-garde developments began early in the

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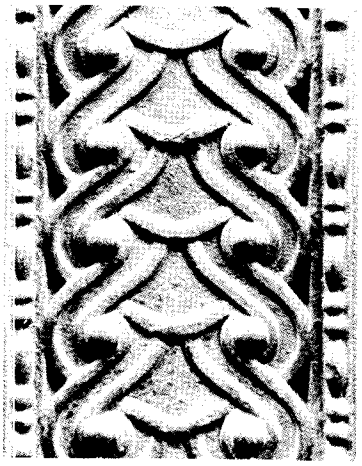

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century. An enormously expanded public and a transformation of the social circumstances in which art is made, presented, and acclaimed —these are surely responsible. Then, too, after Joyce, after Proust, Eliot, Mann, Beckett, Ionesco, after the American poetry and fiction of these fifty years, it is no longer possible to think about language in the old way. Does anyone any longer really believe that the sentence should be broken up, or that words would gain in power if they lost their connotations? Or that nouns must be eliminated? In fact, the whole effect of the New Criticism was to reclaim all that baggage of language which Gertrude Stein thought could be checked at the station indefinitely. More recent criticism, and recent poetry, have moved to salvage language as if from a débacle. Perhaps it was the 30's, and then World War II, that made language come to seem a fragile, battered thing, unequal to further assault or experiment.

HST

PLAIN SPEAKING: AN ORAL BIOGRAPHY OF HARRY S TRUMAN. By MERLE MILLER. *Putnam. 448 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by SAMUEL MCCRACKEN

IT WAS only to be expected, once the spirit of nostalgia entered politics, that its first victim should be the memory of Harry S Truman. For Mr. Truman's career began in the Harding administration (in what I suppose we shall have to learn to call "the Gatsby Era") and it was almost literally only yesterday that he was with us, very much a resident of the first Nixon term. (Alice Roosevelt Longworth has even better claims as a cult figure, since she is still with us, and used to play poker with *Senator* Harding and the Duchess.) Just as important—for nostalgia as defined today means homesicknesses for a time one has never inhabited—nearly half the population has been born since he left the White House.

Plain Speaking is the sort of book that begs you to clasp it to its bosom, and anyone with affection and respect for its subject will doubtless be tempted to do so. Although sales figures suggest that a great many people have given in to temptation, an only moderately beady-eyed reading indicates that in politics as elsewhere, nostalgia is hostile, even fatal, to more important values.

The heart of the book is a set of taped interviews with Truman made in 1961-62 for a television series that never saw production. These have been filled out with interviews of various Truman intimates, and provided with an *apparatus criticus* of irritating inconsistency and vagueness. Miller starts us off with a note on language, pointing out that his subject sometimes said "fella" and sometimes "fellow," and that he has been accurately transcribed in this inconsistency. Now, quite apart from the question of whether any Midwesterner *ever* says "fellow" in conversation, one notes that Truman is not otherwise rendered phonetically, and wonders indeed just how edited the transcripts are, whether cleaned up for lucidity and economy, what proportion of the total conversation is here recorded, what principles of selection governed the excisions, and so forth—questions on which Miller is no help at all.

Apart from their other faults, Miller's comments are sometimes highly tendentious. Thus at the Wake Island Truman-MacArthur conference, a concealed secretary surreptitiously took notes on the discussion. When, some months later, a dispute arose as to what had really been said, the transcript, supporting Truman's version, was leaked to the press. In his interview with Miller, Truman denied arranging for the secretary, winking ever so slightly as he did so. Miller treats the whole incident with a kind of light-hearted admiration for the way in which the country slicker outsmarted the pompous general. Elsewhere the book is suffused with a disdain for the present incumbent of the White House and his subordinates, and one wonders

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whether this would have been any less had it been discovered that rather than recording the conversations in his office, Richard M. Nixon had concealed Rose Mary Woods in a closet.

These matters of form would be less bothersome if the content were more satisfying. But there is very little new here, especially for anyone who listened to Truman's latter-day fulminations, whether on the air or in print. What appears to be the one revelation involves Dwight Eisenhower's alleged plan to marry his *chauffeuse* and George Marshall's negative reaction to this idea. It seems almost unutterably trivial to be the book's major contribution to history. As for the rest, well, much of the text is taken up with the *idées fixes* which dominated Harry S Truman in his eighth decade. Generals always make bad Presidents, and Dwight D. Eisenhower is the most conspicuous proof; country boys who make it big should not forget who they are and where they come from; weak Presidents do more harm than strong ones; George C. Marshall was a very great man, the rare exception to the rule that generals are stupid, vainglorious sons-of-bitches.

Truman's knowledge of history is perhaps the most interesting phenomenon in these discussions. He retained a fairly detailed knowledge of the nuts-and-bolts of American history, one certainly unusual in the average politician. And from this detailed knowledge he was not shy about forming political, historical, and philosophical generalizations, of which an oft-repeated one is: "The only thing new in the world is the history you don't know." At times, his reading of the past was oddly influenced by a desire to make everything fit his generalizations as closely as possible, not a fault peculiar to Harry S Truman. He believed, for example, that the Presidents from Tyler through Pierce (excluding Taylor on account of the shortness of his term) were all weak men whose weakness led to the Civil War. Now, no one would be inclined to dispute this characterization of Fillmore, Pierce, and Buchanan, but it is certainly too severe on Tyler, and simply ludicrous when applied to James K. Polk. But to give these Presidents their due would have interrupted the otherwise edifying picture of a string of weak Whigs and Doughface Democrats unwilling to use the power of the Presidency to settle the issues of the day, eventually bringing on by their inaction a bloody civil war. Which is to say merely that Truman was, after all, only an amateur of history, prone therefore to the amateur's faults. And while one can think of examples of historical dilettantes in power who might have done better in ignorance of history, Truman was not one of these, for however simplistic his vision of the American past, it was remarkably undistorted. One cannot imagine him claiming, as Richard Nixon has, that Thomas Jefferson had defied John Marshall's *subpoena duces tecum*.

But the most intriguing question raised by this book is why it should be so inordinately popular. The most obvious explanation is that a public sickened by going on two years of constant and chronic duplicity in high places naturally loves a compendium of plain talk and this splendidly plain-talking old man.

Perhaps. But this requires a rather curious understanding of plain talk, one which suffuses the book and oozes out into the title. It should be noted, first of all, that Truman almost never says anything to his own disadvantage. His connection with the Pendergast machine is treated with stunning discretion. He does admit that he gave Bennett Champ Clark a federal judgeship knowing he was unfit for office, and he admits to a major error in having appointed Tom Clark to the Supreme Court (but here he is so hard on Clark that one hardly notices the admission of error). Generally, however, the plain talk consisted in saying very frankly and occasionally profanely just how wrong almost everybody else was who disagreed with Harry S Truman.

No. What people react to so favorably is not the candor, which is all too often rather mean-spirited—for Truman had few heroes, and very little regard for anyone who was not a hero—but a personality which remains, in these pages, immensely appealing. And to someone of warmth and genuineness, much is forgiven. But there is something else as well. One looks at San Clemente and Key Biscayne, and then remembers the simplicity of the summer White House in Independence. One sees the almost Oriental splendor of the peregrinating White House, and is reminded of Truman's remark that the first thing he did when he got back to Independence in January 1953 was to carry the grips to the attic. (Surely, he unpacked them first.) And one listens in appalled dismay to increasingly Byzantine mysticism about "The Presidency," and one reads Harry Truman's commentary on laying down the reins of office:

> I always kept in mind something old Ben Franklin said. . . . They had a big discussion about what should be done about ex-Presidents, and . . . Hamilton . . . said that it would be a terrible thing to degrade them by putting them back among the common people. . . but . . . Franklin didn't agree: "In free governments the rulers are the servants and the people their superiors and sovereigns. For the former therefore to return among the latter is not to degrade them but to promote them."
>
> Mr. Truman smiled, and he said, "I kept that in mind when I was in the White House, and I've had it in mind ever since I got my . . . promotion."

Looking at this passage, and then around one, one is not so surprised that Truman should be enjoying a revival.

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